

NEWS IN BRIEF

King Hussein Bridge to close on Tuesday

AMMAN (Petra) — The King Hussein Bridge on the Jordan River will be closed to traffic entering and leaving the Palestinian National Authority territories on Tuesday, April 7. Public Security Department sources said Saturday. The sources added that persons holding a Jerusalem residence card and foreigners are excluded and can travel via the bridge on Tuesday.

Hoteliers asked to reduce prices for Jordanians

AMMAN (Petra) — In a bid to encourage and promote internal tourism, the Jordan Hotels Association, in coordination with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, has requested hoteliers in the Dead Sea area, Hammamat Ma'een, Aqaba and Wadi Mousa to grant discounts of up to 50 per cent to Jordanians. This step is part of a marketing campaign which will continue through Sept. 19.

Airbus recognises RJ's technical crew

AMMAN (Petra) — Royal Jordanian (RJ) has received a certificate of appreciation from the Airbus company in recognition of the unique performance of RJ's technical and engineering personnel. The certificate noted that the three Airbus A320 planes in the RJ fleet clocked 7,325 flight hours last year, while the fleet's six Airbus A310 totalled 18,062 flight hours.



PRINCE MOHAMMAD BRIEFED ON PAN-ARAB GAMES: HRH Prince Mohammad, the personal representative of His Majesty King Hussein, Saturday leaves the Ministry of Culture and Youth after receiving a briefing by Minister of Culture and Youth Talal Sata'n Al Hassan on preparations for the Ninth Pan-Arab Games, which will be held in Amman in August 1999 (Petra photo)

Jordanian-Danish business meeting in Denmark set for end of month

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordanian Businessmen Association (JBA), in conjunction with Denmark's honorary consul in Jordan Tawfiq Kawar, is organising an economic conference in Copenhagen toward the end of April under the theme "Jordanian-Danish investment opportunities."

Taking part in the conference will be Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Jawad Anani, Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf, Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Hani Mulki and Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji, in addition to a delegation of 40 Jordanian businesspeople representing the country's various economic sectors led by Hamdi Tabbaa, JBA chairperson.

The conference, which will be held during His Majesty King Hussein's visit to Denmark, entails a detailed analysis of the current Jordanian economic situation and future prospects and investment opportunities in the Kingdom.

The Danish side will focus attention on bilateral cooperation in developing water resources and wastewater treatment, as well as prospects of investments in the health sector, among other subjects.

At least 150 leading businesspeople from various Danish companies are expected to take part in the meetings. They and their Jordanian counterparts will explore areas for

economic cooperation and increasing the volume of trade exchanges in light of Jordan's recent signing of the European Association accord.

The two sides are expected to sign protocols on a Danish loan to Jordan and the establishment of a joint Jordan-Denmark council grouping businesspeople from both sides.

Jordan will present facets of its tourist attractions through posters and publications and will present ideas on areas within the Kingdom suitable for investment in the tourism industry.

A JBA delegation last visited Denmark in March 1995 and held talks with the Federation of Danish Industries.

Building collapse in Mafraq injures 23

MAFRAQ (Petra) — Twenty-three people were injured Saturday when a building under construction at Al al Bayt University in Mafraq collapsed, according to Yousef Tahat, Mafraq Hospital director.

The injured, including 13 Jordanians and 10 of other nationalities, were rushed to the hospital for treatment. Dr.

Tahat said, noting that 11 of the total have already been discharged and three were listed in fair condition at Mafraq Hospital.

The remaining 11 have been transferred to Al Bashir and Zarqa hospitals, he added.

According to Al al Bayt sources, the ceiling of the building caved in while workers were applying concrete to

the roof.

Meanwhile, the Civil Defence Department (CDD) Saturday announced that a total of 42,156 accidents, including fires and cases requiring rescue operations and first aid, were reported in 1997, up from 37,993 in 1996.

CDD Director General Theeb Ma'ani said house fires

caused by heaters in 1997 registered an increase of 27.1 per cent over the previous year.

Major General Ma'ani said traffic accidents killed more than 500 people. However, he noted that fires in factories last year dropped by 32.9 per cent over the 1996 figures, largely due to increased precautionary measures at the factories.

Traffic accidents kill two, injure 24

AMMAN (J.T.) — Two were killed and 24 injured in four fuel-tanker related traffic accidents Saturday in the Mafraq governorate, according to a statement from the Civil Defence Department (CDD).

Of the 24 injured, five children riding a pickup truck that collided with a fuel tanker sustained critical injuries.

The five children were flown from the scene of the accident, Rweishid, to King Hussein Medical Centre's Intensive Care Unit (ICU), said the CDD statement.

A mixture of fuel on the road and rain caused slippery road conditions, said the statement.

An accident involving a military vehicle and a fuel tanker between Safawi and Ashqaf, resulting from poor weather conditions, left one dead and 10 injured.

The injured civilians were transferred to Shamel Medical Centre, while the military personnel were sent to the Royal Airforce's Medical Centre, said a statement from the CDD.

Meanwhile in Riha, two fuel tanker-related accidents, also resulting from slippery road conditions, killed one and injured nine. Seven of the injured were transferred to Mafraq Hospital and two taken to Eidoun Military Hospital.

NAF announces new procedures for loans, increase in monthly aid

AMMAN (Petra) — The National Aid Fund (NAF) Saturday announced new procedures for providing loans to needy persons and families and an increase in the amount of monthly aid to individuals.

NAF Director General Adel Shamaileh said needy families with 10 or more members will now receive JD82 in aid per month, up from JD60. Smaller families will receive proportionally smaller amounts according to a scale that reaches down to JD30 in monthly aid to a single needy individual, he added.

Dr. Shamaileh also

announced that needy individuals can borrow up to JD4,000 in interest-free loans to be paid back over a period of 10 years.

The NAF offers larger interest-free loans to families, groups of individuals or charitable societies to start businesses, provided that the ventures include more than manager and generate returns at least equal to the monthly amount of cash that such groups can receive.

All loans are allowed a grace period of up to one year once the business has started production, according to Dr. Shamaileh, who pointed out

that priority for loans is given to groups or individuals who plan to start projects in villages and rural regions and those businesses which employ Jordanian primary materials.

Dr. Shamaileh said that on the occasion of the coming Eid Al Adha, the NAF has distributed cash gifts to 200 poor families in 16 regions.

Noting that the NAF has allocated JD300,000 for such gifts this year, Dr. Shamaileh said there will be other gift distributions at the start of the school year and the beginning of the winter season.

Nurses' association elects new president, board

By Odeh Odeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordanian Nurses Association (JNA) has elected Khaled Rabab'a as new JNA president and a six-member association board for a two-year term.

Mr. Rabab'a won 338 votes against 64 votes to the second place candidate, Nazih Bezour, and 29 votes to the third place candidate, Haitham Haddadin. A total of 445 out of 866 registered nurses cast ballots in the elections.

Eight nurses had run for seats on the board, according to association sources, who added that members who had not paid their annual dues, were not allowed to vote, in accordance with JNA regulations.

During a general assembly meeting held to announce the election results, a leading association member, Hind Abu Sufeh, said there was a need to develop the nursing profession by promoting nurses' skills in order to help the country meet the challenges of the coming century.

She also asked that the association members contribute more in fees to the JNA to secure housing and increase savings for the nurses. She urged the association board to find solutions to outstanding problems associated with the profession.

Mr. Abu Sufeh also demanded the creation of a higher nursing council so that the affairs of the nursing profession can be better run.

Hashem Salameh, the outgoing JNA president, briefed the general assembly on a number of activities and reported that the association lodged protests with the concerned government departments about the district governor of Shuneh in the Jordan Valley, who he alleged had insulted female nurses working at the South Shuneh Hospital.

He also said the outgoing board had secured a 50 per cent allowance for the nurses working for the Ministry of Education, the same percentage as their colleagues employed by the Ministry of Health.

Rural region electrification project continues

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources announced Saturday that the project of providing electrical services to villages and settlements in the rural regions of Jordan is being carried out by three organisations that will continue through the rest of the present year.

Alli Bakhit, project manager at the ministry, said the National Electricity and Power Company (NEPCO), the Jordan Electric Power Company (JEPCO) and the Irbid District Electricity Company (IDEC) have been entrusted with the task.

NEPCO has been requested to supply power to 86 villages and settlements, build 57 transformer stations, and install 5,209 utility poles at the total cost of JD3

million, according to Mr. Bakhit. He said 31 villages were electrified last year and 17 transformer stations were built, adding that work is under way to provide electricity to 17 villages and construct 12 transformer stations this year.

Referring to the IDEC, Mr. Bakhit said the company has been working to supply 109 villages with electricity and build 85 transformer stations at the total cost of JD3.6 million.

Six villages were supplied with power in 1997 at the cost of JD114,977, and this year the IDEC will provide electricity to 21 villages at the cost of JD868,636, he said.

According to Mr. Bakhit, JEPCO has been entrusted with supplying power to 123 villages and

settlements and the construction of 130 transformer stations at the cost of JD3.7 million.

In 1997, 100 of these

villages were supplied with electricity, and the rest of the project will be completed during this month, he added.

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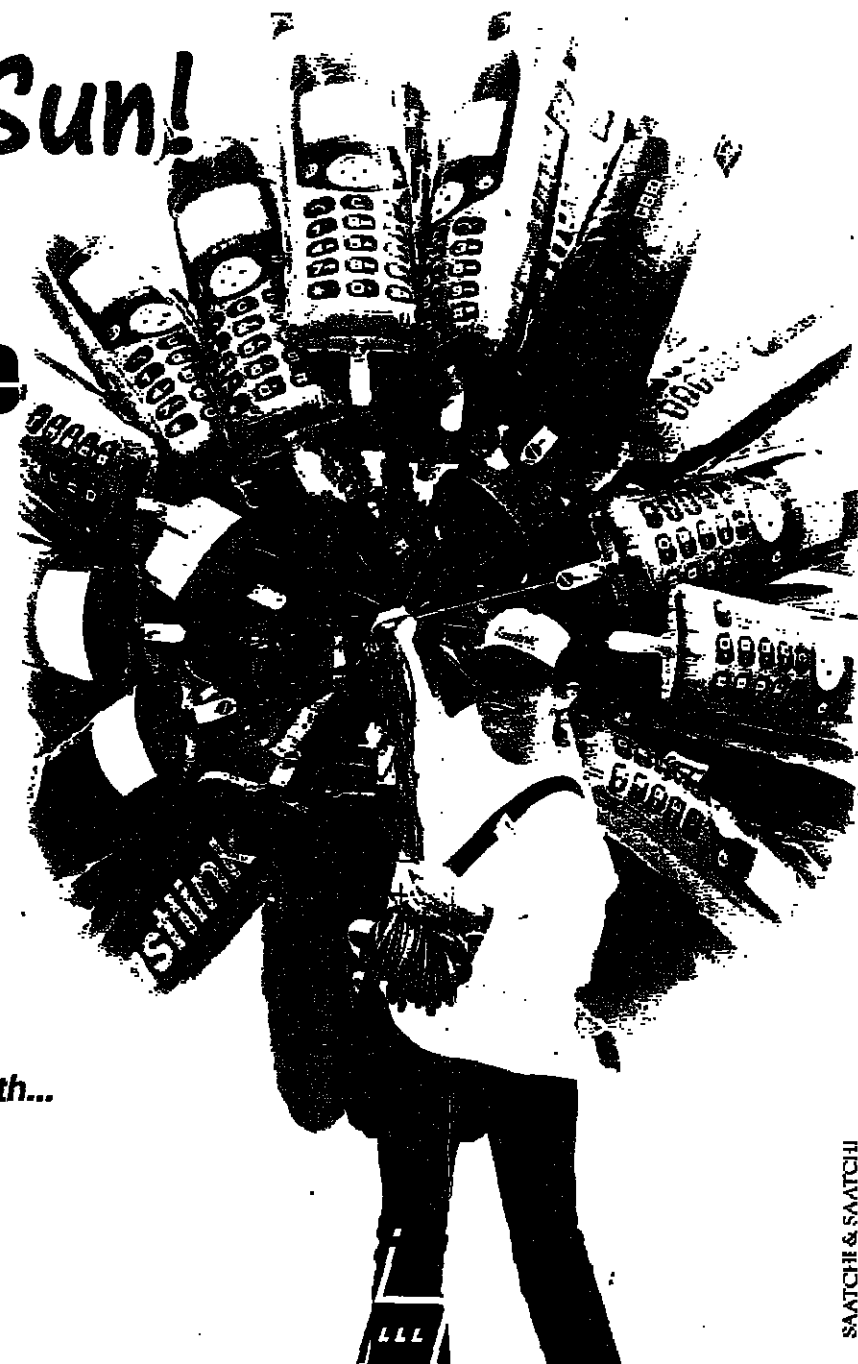
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What's Going On

FILMS

- * "La Fièvre Monte à El Pao" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh on Monday at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.
- * Cuban film "Hello Hemingway" (with subtitles in English) at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman at 5:00 p.m.

AMMAN INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL

- * Dramatic reading "Al Mutassif" at Osama Al Mashini Theatre, Abdali, at 6:00 p.m.
- * Closing ceremony: musical concert at the Royal Cultural Centre, main theatre at 9:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

- * Works by Mohammad Al Shammari at Rawaq Al Balqa, Fuheis, until April 7.
- * Exhibition of electrical equipment, home appliances, clothing, perfume, sweets (marking the advent of Eid Al Adha) at the University of Jordan, until April 7.
- * Paintings on handmade paper at Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Saqra St. (Tel. 5699141/2), until April 25.
- * Modern Jordanian Ceramics by Raed Al Dahleh at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until April 10.
- * Works by Jordanian artist Yousef Baddawi at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh until April 9 (Tel. 4643251/2). Also displaying a private collection of Mamdouh Bisharat entitled "A Vision, An Identity" and works by contemporary Arab artists — "The New Collection."

U.K. says time to get tough on environment crime

LONDON (R) — Britain said Saturday it was time for countries to get tough on international environmental crime and work to stamp out illegal markets in wildlife trade and ozone depleting gases.

Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, chairman of a two-day meeting of environment ministers from Russia and the group of seven industrial countries, said the gathering would focus on ways of policing international agreements.

Ministers from Germany, Italy, Canada, France, Japan, Britain, the United States and Russia (G8) will discuss drawing up rules on targets set for the control of climate-altering greenhouse gases, and curbing the illegal trade in endangered animals.

Mr. Prescott said the various bans had created an illegal market which was sometimes more profitable than the narcotics trade.

"When you ban something you create an illegal market...We can't tolerate

people making an awful lot of money in this way and damaging the environment. So we have got to be pretty tough and you can be sure we are going to do that," Mr. Prescott told BBC Radio.

Industrialised countries agreed at the Kyoto summit on global warming last year to bring emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) and other gases thought to contribute to global warming to 5.2 per cent below 1990 levels by around 2010.

But international environmental crime, particularly in endangered species, is estimated to be worth some \$20 billion each year.

Tigers, rhinos, bears and chitrus, rare Tibetan antelopes, are among animals being killed and traded for body parts or pelts.

The weekend meeting at Leeds castle, south of London, will also tackle the smuggling of bootleg CFCs — banned ozone depleting chlorofluorocarbons found in coolant, cleaning and propellant gases — which

are made in Russia, China and former East bloc countries and sent to the West.

Mr. Prescott said other ministers would want to talk to Russia about what it was doing to crackdown on the trade in CFCs.

"They (the Russians) have not necessarily been as tough as some other countries have been," he said.

Mr. Prescott said every nation could employ better enforcement techniques. Wildlife groups concerned about the tiger trade tend to point to the United States and Japan as examples of where legislation is not tight enough.

Jobs and the environment will also feature prominently in the talks. There is considerable interest within the European Union on the job implications of environmental policies and a belief that there can be a net gain in job creation as a result of a full environmental agenda.



U.S. Attorney Wilma Lewis meets reporters outside federal court to announce that CIA covert operative Douglas Fred Groat was charged with tipping off two foreign governments that the U.S. had broken their code systems. Man at left unidentified (AP photo)

U.S. accuses ex-CIA agent of passing secrets

WASHINGTON (R) — A disgruntled former CIA officer has been arrested on charges he passed secrets to two foreign nations about how the agency cracked their code communications. U.S. officials said Friday.

Douglas Groat, 50, who worked at the Central Intelligence Agency for 16 years until being fired in 1996, was also charged with trying to extort more than \$500,000 from the spy agency in return for not revealing secrets to foreign governments.

During a brief court hearing, a lawyer for Mr. Groat entered a not guilty plea to the five charges, two of which carry a possible death penalty. The case was the latest spy scandal to rock the CIA in recent years.

U.S. attorney Wilma Lewis said after the hearing that Mr. Groat participated during his CIA career in classified covert operations aimed at the penetration of cryptographic systems of foreign governments.

He allegedly disclosed national defence information concerning the targeting and compromise of the cryptographic systems of two unidentified foreign governments to those governments.

Ms. Lewis said the countries were not named in the indictment for "national security reasons."

The indictment alleged that Mr. Groat handed over the secrets to representatives of a foreign government "with intent and reason to believe that said information would be used to the injury of the United States and to the advantage of a foreign nation."

"The alleged unauthorized disclosure of these activities could have a significant impact on the national security of the United States," said Ms. Lewis, whose office will prosecute the case.

"This case involves highly sensitive classified information that could have a serious impact on the national security of the United States. In short, this is a serious espionage case," she said.

The alleged espionage took place in late March and April 1997, while the alleged extortion scheme began in May 1996 and lasted until February 1998, the officials said. Mr. Groat was arrested by FBI agents without incident Thursday.

After prosecutors warned that Mr. Groat may try to flee the country, chief U.S. district judge Norma Holloway Johnson ordered Mr. Groat held without bond until next Thursday, when there will be another hearing.

Prosecutor Eric Dubelier told the judge that Mr. Groat had been trained by the CIA "in travelling in false identification and deception."

He said Mr. Groat possessed sensitive intelligence information that could cause "grave damage" to national security if disclosed.

Mr. Groat, who was dressed in dark blue prison clothing, stood before the judge during the hearing with his hands behind his back. Mr. Groat once conferred with his court-appointed lawyers, but never said anything during the proceeding held under unusually heavy security.

George Tenet, the head of the CIA, said in a statement the full extent of any damage to national security had yet to be determined.

"The charges against Mr. Groat are extremely serious," Mr. Tenet said. "His arrest demonstrates that the

U.S. government will not rest in our efforts against those who would commit espionage... nor will we be intimidated by threats of blackmail."

Mr. Groat worked as a technical officer in the CIA's Directorate for Science and Technology. He last had access to classified information in 1993, when he was placed on administrative leave for "personnel reasons," a U.S. official said, declining to elaborate.

The official declined to say why Mr. Groat, who in the 1970s had been a U.S. Army lieutenant, a deputy U.S. marshal and a police officer in Greenville, N.Y., was fired.

Officials said it would be up to Attorney General Janet Reno to decide whether to seek the death penalty in the case. They said the year-old investigation would continue.

The case is the latest in a series of embarrassing spy cases involving the CIA.

CIA turncoat Aldrich Ames was arrested in 1994 and has pleaded guilty to betraying at least 11 Soviet and East European agents working for the United States, in one of the most damaging espionage cases in U.S. history.

Mr. Ames, a career officer who spent much of his 31 years in the CIA in counterintelligence, is serving a life sentence in a U.S. prison.

Confessed double-agent Harold Nicholson pleaded guilty last year to spying for Moscow, becoming the highest ranking CIA officer convicted in a spy case.

Mr. Nicholson, a 16-year CIA veteran who helped train for undercover missions, admitted collecting \$300,000 from the Russians.

Chinese dissident Xu Wenli released

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese police released veteran Chinese dissident Xu Wenli early Saturday after detaining him for 24 hours over an application he made to publish a magazine.

"The police brought me home around 8:00 a.m. (0000 GMT) after questioning me since Friday morning," Mr. Xu told AFP. "But in fact, I wanted to stay in the police station until we had resolved this question once and for all," he added.

Police searched Mr. Xu's home Friday morning and took away his computer, fax machine, papers and the belongings of his wife and child.

"They took me to a police station in Xuanwu district and then they told me they were upgrading my interrogation to a more serious level, but I refused to answer their questions," Mr. Xu said.

"I asked for an apology broadcast on national television, the return of all my belongings and compensation because I have done nothing illegal. It is perfectly within my rights to apply to the government to publish a magazine."

Mr. Xu and fellow dissident Qin Yongmin sought permission in mid-March to publish a magazine called "Human Rights Watch" which would monitor progress in China's human rights situation following Beijing's signing of the U.N. Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and its promise to sign a sister covenant on political and civil rights.

Mr. Qin was questioned for four hours on the night of March 29 over the application and his stream of protest letters, but was subsequently released.

Mr. Qin, aged 44, and a

contemporary of Mr. Xu, was first sentenced in 1981 to eight years in a labour camp for taking part in the 1978-79 Democracy Wall movement and served another two-year term for writing a "Peace Charter" with other dissidents in 1994.

Mr. Xu spent 12 years in jail after taking part in the Democracy Wall movement.

He was briefly detained in February as he prepared to meet a U.S.-based journalist in a Beijing restaurant.

In a separate development, the mother of dissident Wang Dan left Beijing Saturday to visit him in jail in northeastern China amid reports that he may be released before the visit of U.S. President Bill Clinton to China in late June.

A dissident source, who declined to be identified, said Wang Lingyun would visit her student activist son later Saturday but said there was no news on his possible release.

Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan Friday dismissed reports that Wang Dan would be released as part of a deal with the U.S. administration.

Speaking in London, Mr. Tang said Mr. Wang was "no ordinary student" but a criminal serving his sentence. Any change in his sentence would be handled first through the judicial process, he said.

The New York Times reported Thursday that China had agreed to release the 29-year-old dissident, who was a student leader during the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, as part of an agreement last month by which the United States would drop sponsorship of a U.N. resolution condemning China's human rights policies.

Sri Lanka to tighten laws against child abuse

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lanka will make it a legally punishable offence to involve children in war and armed conflict when it presents new legislation against child abuse in parliament shortly, a state-owned newspaper reported Saturday.

The new laws would be incorporated in a bill to establish a child protection authority as recommended by a committee appointed to look into child abuse, the Daily News newspaper said.

The newspaper did not give details of the bill or when it would be presented to parliament.

The government has repeatedly accused the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of using children

in their 14-year-old war to establish a separate homeland for minority Tamils in the north and east.

Government ministers have earlier said the new legislation will also criminalise the use of children for begging, drug trafficking and sex.

Child abuse is a growing problem in the island country and social workers say poverty-stricken Sri Lanka, which relies on tourism as a main source of foreign exchange and employment, has become a popular destination for paedophiles.

The government in 1996 passed tough laws aimed at curbing paedophilia and non-governmental organisations run awareness campaigns to combat the menace.

Sri Lanka to amend LTTE ban to exclude press

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lanka will pass an amendment to exclude journalists from being prosecuted under a law banning contact with Tamil Tiger rebels, Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar said Saturday.

"It is going to be amended. It will exclude journalists getting faxes and talking to them (rebels)," Mr. Kadirgamar told Reuters.

Sri Lanka formally outlawed Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels after blaming them for a bomb attack at the country's holiest Buddhist shrine in the hill town of Kandy in January.

The ban said any person who communicated any "order, decision or declaration or exhortation" made by the LTTE, or on their

behalf would be liable to imprisonment for between seven and 15 years.

The ban had raised fears among journalists, who regularly receive rebel press statements from the LTTE's London offices and include them in their reports, that they could be prosecuted under the law.

But Mr. Kadirgamar said the notification was now being amended to ensure that journalists could continue to work freely.

The ban notification already excludes various organisations engaged in humanitarian work in the war-affected areas.

The LTTE have been fighting for a separate homeland for minority Tamils in Sri Lanka's north and east since 1983.

N. Korea asks for inter-Korean meeting in apparent major breakthrough

SEOUL (AFP) — North Korea Saturday asked for a vice-ministerial level meeting with the south next week to discuss fertiliser aid and other issues, in what appeared to be a major breakthrough in their tense relationship.

"They (the North) proposed a vice-ministerial level meeting in Beijing Saturday, April 11," said a spokesman for the Unification Ministry which handles North-South affairs.

If they take place, the talks would be the first official high-level government-to-government contact since the July of 1994, when the two sides met to arrange a North-South summit, later aborted by the death of the North's leader Kim Il-Sung.

The ministry spokesman said the request was made by a Red Cross telephone hotline across the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) and was addressed to South Korean Red Cross President Chung Won-Shik from his counterpart Ri Sung-Ho.

He said Seoul, which last month said it was ready to help supply fertiliser to help the North's crippled agricultural system during the crucial spring planting season, had yet to reply to the request.

"In the message the North said it would send a five-member delegation led by a vice-minister level official to Beijing on April 11 to discuss the provision of fertilisers and other issues of bilateral concern which the

South Korean side put forward during the North-South (Red Cross) meeting in Beijing March 25," he said.

He said the message suggested the Beijing World Hotel as a convenient venue, and asked the south to take "corresponding steps."

"We will react to the proposal after consultations with the relevant government agencies," he said.

The request came a day after a panel of U.S. experts said it estimated that at least one million North Koreans had died of hunger, and seemed to signal desperation in Pyongyang over the country's dire food shortages.

The estimate by the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations was published by USA Today, which quoted the experts as saying they ranked the North's famine in the same category as those in Somalia and Ethiopia.

If it takes place, the meeting would appear to be a major plus for the fledgling new north-south policies of the South's President Kim Dae-Jung, who is currently in London for the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit.

The basis of the new policies is a pledge to reject any "German-style" absorption of the food-starved North by the South, and a strict separation of politics from bilateral economic contacts.

Mr. Kim has also placed

priority on uniting the millions of families divided by the 1950-53 Korean war.

Since the war only one reunion has been held, involving a handful of family members, in 1985. Many have no idea whether relatives are alive or dead.

But observers here warned against expecting too much, noting that time after time North-South overtures have broken down, as they did over food aid in 1995, when the North refused to acknowledge that talks then, also in Beijing, were official.

The Red Cross societies of the two Koreas agreed in their March meeting in Beijing that the South would rush 50,000 tonnes of emergency food aid to the North.

At that meeting, which followed the breakdown of four-party peace talks in Geneva earlier in the month, the North side also pledged to take the South's request for a meeting on family reunions, back to the North.

North Korea, which has said its supplies of food grains ran out completely in March, has asked the South through unofficial channels for 200,000 tonnes of nitrate fertilisers, and agricultural experts say the need is critical.

On March 15, Seoul said it planned to propose a meeting on the fertiliser offer after a southern non-governmental agricultural expert relayed a request from "a high official in Pyongyang."

Indonesian students rally for third day after clashes

JAKARTA (AFP) — Indonesian students rallied for a third consecutive day Saturday at a university campus, after dozens were injured in clashes during earlier demonstrations.

Some 500 students from various faculties took part in the protest, student Rahayu said from Gajah Mada University in the central Java city of Yogyakarta.

The demonstrators were demanding the replacement of President Suharto as a solution to the economic crisis, said a statement released by the students grouped under the Committee of the People's Movement for Reformation.

Rahayu said Saturday's protest ended peacefully after about two hours. Some 500 police and troops were deployed at the campus Friday, he added.

Clashes on the previous two days occurred when

students tried to march from the campus towards the city centre.

Authorities have been tolerant of scores of demonstrations at campuses across the country in recent weeks but security forces have blocked those which strayed from university grounds.

In Friday's clashes, the students were supported by residents as they stoned and beat security forces. Police beat them in turn and chased them into their campus.

Four police officers and 13 to 15 students were reported injured. At least 20 students were injured at the campus Thursday when security forces fired tear gas to block their march.

Indonesia is in the grip of a devastating economic crisis which has been accompanied by mounting opposition to Mr. Suharto's 32 years of unbroken rule.

Officer implicated in E. Timor massacre is promoted

JAKARTA (AFP) — One of the Indonesian officers implicated in the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre in East Timor has been promoted from major general to lieutenant general following his retirement, newspapers reported Saturday.

General Sintong Pandjaitan, a specialist in covert operations, was in 1991 head of the military region covering East Timor, which Indonesia invaded in 1975 and annexed the following year.

On Nov. 12 in Dili's Santa Cruz cemetery, troops opened fire on a 4,000-strong peaceful protest. Officials said 50 people were killed but international organisations said more than 200 died.

Woman questioned for 15 hours over Diana love letters theft

LONDON (AFP) — A woman arrested here for trying to sell stolen letters written by the late Diana, Princess of Wales, to a former lover during a five-year affair, was released from custody Friday.

Anna Ferretti, a 39-year-old Italian, underwent 15 hours of questioning by police over the theft of the 62 letters reported to have been taken from a safe at the home of James Hewitt.

Ms. Ferretti, an ex-fiancee of Mr. Hewitt's, was detained Thursday as she was about to board a train to Paris. "My client has been fully cooperative with the police," said her lawyer, Michael Caplan, who declined to

comment further on the case.

Thursday, the tabloid Mirror daily said Ms. Ferretti had taken the letters from Mr. Hewitt's home and was trying to sell them for 150,000 pounds (\$250,000).

Diana admitted an affair with Mr. Hewitt, a former British army major, between 1988 and 1992 when she was still married to Prince Charles.

The paper said it took the letters and handed them over to the princess's former office without payment.

In a television interview in 1995, Diana said she had "adored" him, but added that he had also let her down badly. He was branded a "rat"

by the British press for seemingly exploiting their affair for a kiss-and-tell book.

Faced with press accusations that he had wrongly kept the letters which Diana begged him to destroy, Mr. Hewitt protested that "just because I kept them doesn't mean to say I was going to do anything bad with them."

"They are something that I treasured. Something that was part of our relationship. Something I could hold on to physically as part of a memory," he said in an interview published in Saturday's edition of the Sun.

He said he had already destroyed half the letters.

ASEAN
sets up
fund to
fight forest
fires 'at all'

Head of the
supporters of the

Hong Kong
launch

N. Korea
asylum

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ASEAN sets up fund to fight forest fires 'at all cost'

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN (AFP) — The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) environment ministers Saturday agreed to set up a central fund and mobilise both regional and international resources to contain raging forest fires in Indonesia "at all cost."

The efforts were incorporated in two "sub-regional fire-fighting arrangements" adopted by the ministers at talks here to contain the blazes, which are raging in the Indonesian part of Borneo Island and other provinces.

"The ministers agreed that the priority of the arrangements would be to ensure that all cost that fires are prevented from becoming an economic and environmental threat in Sumatra and Riau provinces, and that fires in East Kalimantan must be contained and not allowed to spread to Central and West Kalimantan," the ministers said in a joint statement.

It said the fire-fighting arrangements would incorporate "mechanisms to rapidly activate and mobilise efforts to put out the fires before they get out of control, and channel additional and complementary resources from the region and internationally."

The central revolving fund would be set up from both regional and international contributions, the statement said, without giving any figures.

Brunei's Environment Minister Ismail Damit warned in his opening remarks at the meeting Saturday that ASEAN must act immediately to tackle the "environmental calamity" of the forest infernos.

"The environmental calamity that has affected our region warrants ASEAN to act now and fast," he said at the third meeting of environment ministers from the ASEAN to discuss the fires since December.

Blazes raging out of control in Indonesia, Brunei and Malaysia are threatening to send clouds of smog across the region. Choking smoke from forest fires last year gave thousands of people respiratory ailments, threatened air and sea safety and deterred tourists.



Head of the Democratic Party Martin Lee (second right) leads party candidates and supporters at the party's campaign kick-off rally in a Hong Kong park (AP photo)

Hong Kong's Democratic Party launches election campaign

HONG KONG (AFP) — Hong Kong's leading democracy group launched its election campaign for the territory's first post-colonial poll Saturday with a pledge to ignite the "flame of democracy" in China.

The Democratic Party, which emerged as the dominant party in the colonial legislature after elections in 1995, is likely to get only a handful of votes under the new electoral structure.

Party Chairman Martin Lee said Sunday he expects to win at least 11 of the 60 seats up for election.

"Anything short of that and I would be very disappointed," he said.

In a small but noisy rally in central Hong Kong, Mr. Lee called on around 150 party members and supporters to fight for democracy and uphold the rule of law.

"As we face this election in May, we all realise what a heavy burden we carry," he told the rally.

"This is the first time ever there has been some democratic element in elections on Chinese soil. This promises to be the beginning of democracy in the PRC, we

are going to ignite the flame of democracy and it will spread throughout China," he said.

Under Hong Kong's new three-tier voting structure, 10 seats will be returned by an election committee, 30 will be returned by business-based functional constituencies and 20 will be returned directly.

The system has been widely criticised for being too complicated and undemocratic. The Democratic Party claims the structure is designed to keep it out of office.

N. Korean seeks political asylum in Hong Kong

HONG KONG (AFP) — A man claiming to be a high-level North Korean official has requested political asylum in Hong Kong after getting off a train from China, a newspaper reported Saturday.

The Apple Daily newspaper said the official, who arrived at the territory's Hung Hom train station late Friday, requested political asylum from a police officer while his travelling companions were not paying attention.

An official at the South Korean Consulate General in Hong Kong told AFP by phone that the mission had asked the Hong Kong authorities for information on the newspaper report, but that there had so far been no response.

"We don't know who this man is," the official said, adding the consulate is not yet officially involved in enquiries.

Apple Daily said Hung Hom police had sent a large contingent of officers to the police station to escort the man safely into

custody and Hong Kong Security Bureau officials are investigating the man's identity.

The Hong Kong government and the Security Bureau refused to comment when contacted by AFP, but an officer at Hung Hom police station said no North Korean was being held. But he refused to confirm if a man had earlier been taken to the station.

The newspaper said security was stepped up at Hung Hom police station Saturday, with additional officers guarding all entrances and exits.

It said the man was still at the police station at 2:00 a.m. Saturday (1800 GMT Friday).

Newspaper reports late last year said a growing number of North Koreans were seeking asylum in Hong Kong.

The Oriental Daily News said at least 15 North Koreans were in the territory and awaiting resettlement in South Korea.

The newspaper said police had been told to treat North Koreans differently from other illegal immigrants due to the sensitivity of the case.

North Korea has no representation in Hong Kong, although there has been talk of Pyongyang establishing a consulate here.

Most North Koreans arriving here have travelled the length of China before slipping across the border, the Oriental Daily said.

Before last July's change of sovereignty North Korean defectors regularly defected via Hong Kong, which was then technically a third country.

South Korea says thousands of would-be defectors are in China and eastern Russia. China's official policy is to send defectors caught in border areas back to North Korea, but many still live and work in China.

Paris, Washington in agreement on U.N. genocide court

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — More than 100 nations have wrapped up the last preliminary meeting leading to the creation of an International Criminal Court (ICC) to try people suspected of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

After three years of negotiations, diplomats said Friday they had made great strides, but that the most controversial questions will be addressed during a three-week conference that opens June 15 in Rome.

Today all nations accepted the idea of establishing an international court in the wake of the bloodshed in the former Yugoslavia and the genocide in Rwanda.

But states are still deeply divided over the core issue — the amount of independence the international court would enjoy.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) claim that China, France, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia and the United

States are opposed to the creation of a really independent international criminal court.

One pressing issue is whether the future court's leading prosecutor will have the authority to pursue criminals in a country without its consent or that of the U.N. Security Council.

Some 50 "like-minded" countries are willing to abide by such authority. They include Argentina, Canada, Germany, South Africa and South Korea. They are backed by an international coalition of some 800 NGOs from around the world, determined to put as much effort behind the ICC as they have in pushing through the international treaty banning landmines.

For the United States, instead, the ICC's top prosecutor should act "only within the context of overall matters that have been referred to the court, either by the U.N. Security Council or by states parties

to the treaty," U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin said Thursday.

The U.S.-based Human Rights Watch's legal counsel Richard Dicker noted a "remarkable similarity in positions" between Washington and Paris.

"For the U.S. and France, the vision of this court is essentially a permanent ad hoc tribunal, that is a court that comes into action on the basis of the Security Council referring a situation to it," he added.

As permanent members of the Security Council, the United States and France have the power of veto, along with Britain, China and Russia.

The United States, according to Mr. Rubin, has also proposed that the ICC "should act when national legal systems fail."

The United States, like France, is concerned that the future ICC might unjustifiably go after their soldiers.

"We need to ensure that, in pursuit of justice, a permanent court does not handcuff governments that take risks to promote international peace and security and to save human lives," Mr. Rubin said.

Between now and the Rome meeting, European diplomats said, there is room for compromise. Britain has already broken ranks with its veto-wielding colleagues on the Security Council and has joined with those who uphold the "Singapore compromise," which would free the ICC prosecutor to pursue any investigation as long as the Security Council does not order him otherwise.

France has said it would rather have a less than perfect court if it were accepted by the highest number of countries, diplomats said.

Echoing a similar idea, Mr. Rubin said: "If such court is to succeed, it will need the support of the United States and other key countries of the world."

Two U.S. companies probed for links to China's missile programme

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Two U.S. companies are under a federal grand jury investigation to determine whether they provided China with expertise that could advance its ballistic missile programme, The New York Times said Saturday.

Investigators, however, were dealt a serious setback in February, when President Bill Clinton authorised one of the two companies to export to China the same expertise that is under investigation, unidentified Mr. Clinton administration officials told the daily.

Justice Department officials complained that it was difficult to prosecute the compa-

nies if the government gave its blessing to the deal, the officials added.

The two companies under investigation are Loral Space and Communications of New York and Hughes Electronics, a Los Angeles-based subsidiary of General Motors Corp.

Both firms denied any wrongdoing but refused to comment on the investigation, the daily said.

The probe stems from a 1996 accident in which a Chinese satellite carrying a Loral satellite blew up. In response to a Chinese request, Loral and Hughes sent experts to study what went wrong.

After the U.S. Customs Service and the Department of Justice were informed of the exchange, they began a criminal inquiry to see if the data and information provided by the American experts violated existing bans on the export of sensitive technology.

The guidance systems of rockets that put commercial satellites in orbit and long-range nuclear missiles share essentially the same technology.

While the investigation was under way, officials said, Mr. Clinton in February authorised Loral to launch another satellite on a Chinese rocket, providing China with the

same expertise that is at issue. The president can issue waivers to the ban on exports of sensitive technology, on a case-by-case basis.

A senior official said the authorisation went through because the investigation had reached no conclusions and because Loral had properly handled subsequent launches.

White House spokesman Mike McCurry was quoted by the daily as saying that the launch approved by Mr. Clinton "will not contribute to Chinese military capabilities," because Loral has agreed to "stringent safeguards" to prevent unauthorised transfer of technology.

Papon's conviction challenges refuge of collaborator in evil

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The conviction of former French official Maurice Papon takes away the notion that only the masterminds of crimes against humanity can be convicted. The Washington Post said Saturday.

"The verdict may prove most important for its distinctions, which speak to the moral responsibility of one who claimed — as many have — that he was only a cog in a bureaucratic structure," the daily's editorial said.

Thursday's 10-year sentence against the former French official for his role in rounding up and deporting more than 1,500 Jews to Nazi death camps

makes it more difficult for those who cooperated in such crimes to escape justice, the daily added.

Mr. Papon's conviction "tightens accountability by taking away the notion that to be found innocent of taking part in a heinous event such as the Holocaust one need only avoid being a murderous mastermind," the daily said.

Mr. Papon, 87, argued that if he had not carried out his orders he might have been replaced by someone worse or more zealous.

"That classic refuge of the collaborator in evil now stands firmly challenged. Everyone ... can benefit from that lesson," the Post said.

280 dead in sinking of boat off Nigeria

LAGOS (AFP) — Some 280 people drowned when a boat on its way to Gabon sank in the Atlantic off the coast of Nigeria, press reports said Saturday quoting police.

The ship went down in heavy seas Wednesday off the state of Akwa Ibom, the southernmost part of Nigeria, the daily Bode Akinbami and the government Daily Times reported.

Twenty people survived, the reports said. They did not give an exact total for the number on board the vessel which was also carrying food and petrol-based products.

Many bodies had been fished out off the beach at Ibaka, the Mbo district.

Nigerian navy units

and divers were searching for victims.

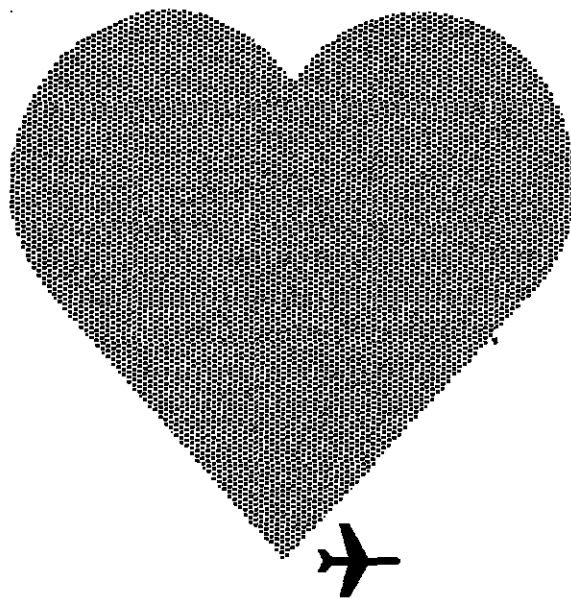
According to one of the survivors, the ship got caught up in a storm just off Ibaka beach, the Daily Monitor newspaper said.

A senior member of staff at the Nigerian Naval College, Olu Akinsoji called on the authorities to impose tighter safety measures on maritime companies operating in the region, the Daily Times said.

The paper noted that several hundred people drowned when a ship sank in the same waters a year ago.

Overcrowding and excessive cargo have routinely been blamed by the local press for similar disasters in recent years.

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WINNING THE HEARTS OF THE WORLD

in Vitrolles, a small town west of Marseilles where his wife stands in for him as mayor. Municipal police wear black paramilitary uniforms as they patrol the streets; left-wing books have been removed from local libraries; funding has been withdrawn from immigrant support groups — and there is a subsidy on offer for each child born to a Europeans-only couple.

It's still unlikely that Mergot will ever come to power. The struggle to unseat Le Pea might even split the NF permanently, for it is most likely held together by his bullying, charismatic personality. But a truly nasty possibility is being born in

Features/News

Jordan Times, Sunday, April 5, 1998

7

American mischief in Italy?

By William Pfaff

PARIS — In February the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), after 36 years, reluctantly released the report of its inspector general's inquiry into the Bay of Pigs fiasco, in which nearly 1,500 Cuban opponents of Fidel Castro were killed during a CIA-sponsored invasion that the CIA leadership no longer believed could succeed.

This account of incompetence, bureaucratic obscurantism and the triumph of "commitment" over common sense has proved no obstacle to the Senate Republican majority leadership's decision recently to try to force the Clinton administration into new clandestine programmes to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

ent Lott of Mississippi, the majority leader, and other Republican senators have amended the State Department authorisation bill so as to promote still another "secret" campaign against the Iraqi leader.

Faith in clandestine action survives in Washington despite a record of failures — or successes with deplorable consequences, as in Guatemala and Cambodia — that goes back even beyond the Bay of Pigs and includes certain morally disastrous episodes only now being revealed.

American responsibility in certain acts of terrorism in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s meant to overturn Italian democracy has been under examination by Italian justice.

Little has so far been reported about this in the United States. However, it deserves attention as not only a secret operation which failed, with bad consequences for everyone involved, but because of what it represented in terms of American political morality.

In December 1969, the Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura in Milan was blown up by a terrorist bomb. Sixteen people were killed and many others were injured. It was the first in a series of anonymous terrorist acts in Italy apparently committed by right-wing extremists.

These outrages anticipated the terrorism of the left which began not long after. Together they provided the political drama of the 1970s in Italy — its "years of lead" — during which right and left effectively cooperated in trying to destroy Italian democracy.

What has not been known until now is that the United States had a part in that effort.

In 1968, the Communist Party had done exceptionally well in the general elections, and young people in Italy, as in France and the United States, were in an uproar about the Vietnam War. East-West tensions were high because of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia to put down the peaceful uprising there that had claimed to represent "socialism with a human face."

At the same time, certain leaders of the Christian Democratic Party in Italy, including former Prime Minister Aldo Moro (later murdered by leftist terrorists), were contemplat-

ing a political "opening to the left" that would allow the Communists, Italy's second largest party, a greater role in the country's affairs.

According to the investigations of the Milan magistrate charged with investigating the Banca dell'Agricoltura bombing, that act and the terrorist outrages which followed were meant to provoke a military coup d'état in Rome to prevent that move to the left. His evidence indicates that American intelligence officers supported, if they did not instigate, those bombings.

The magistrate, Guido Salvini, says that "the Americans knew in advance about this and other bombings of the period, and they actively supported a strategy of tension designed to destabilise the state and create the conditions for a military coup."

(In April 1967, a military coup had taken place in Greece, with American acquiescence and tacit approval.)

Italian state television has also investigated the 1969 Milan bombing, and has broadcast a two-part documentary report of its findings. In the programmes, former CIA officials, as well as survivors of the neofascist Italian political groups implicated in the Milan bombing, discuss the campaign and acknowledge American involvement.

These two programmes were rebroadcast in February on the French-German television channel Arte, which is part of the public broadcasting system in France and is a public-sponsored cable channel in Germany and Belgium.

The charges have had wide circulation in the West European press but have not, so far as I know, had a comprehensive official response from the U.S. government.

It would appear from the television journalists' investigation that U.S. military intelligence, probably naval intelligence (the U.S. military command in Italy is naval), was responsible for the American involvement in the affair.

Given the bureaucratic rivalry and noncommunication between the CIA and military agencies, that seems plausible, even though it would constitute an extraordinary intrusion by military intelligence into political matters outside its competence.

Mr. Salvini has said simply that "foreign citizens" may be among those indicted.

There was, of course, no coup d'état. The Christian Democratic prime minister, Mario Rumor, defied those in his party who wanted a coup. President Giuseppe Saragat threatened to resign rather than preside over "the liquidation of democracy" in Italy.

The "strategy of tension" merely killed or mutilated a number of ordinary Italians. Its actual political effect was to reinforce the left, including the emerging terrorist left — equally hostile to democracy. It is a story worth more American attention, and reflection, than has so far been given.

— International Herald Tribune

As finale nears, theatre groups expand independent network

By Omar Karmi

Special to the Jordan Times

FESTIVAL DIRECTOR Nader Omran looks tired. This is the fifth Amman International Theatre Festival for Independent Groups that he has helped organise, and the biggest to date. But he looks pleased with the estimated 5-600 people who have attended performances every night of the festival: "It has been a success!"

The festival finishes Sunday night. By then, 18 performances from 9 different countries will have been shown. Five workshops and three seminars will have been held, and the festival will for the first time have spread itself to another Jordanian city, Irbid. Around 250 people from all across the world will have been given visas to Jordan — after lobbying various aid and cultural exchange organisations in their homelands for funding — accommodated and sent safely on their way. A total \$50,000 of Amman Municipality money will have been spent, and an as yet unknown amount recaptured through ticket-sales (at JD 4 each). Mr. Omran has reason to be tired.

He also has reason to be pleased. Apart from the good reviews and the popular interest, it is above all an achievement to have successfully organised an independent festival for the fifth year running. Being independent means no official involvement, but also no official help. Everything, from accommodations to lunches, from equipment to manpower, what is shown and who participates, is ultimately the responsibility of the festival organisers. In this case the responsibility lies with independent theatre groups.

Fawanees from Jordan and El Warsha from Egypt and, of course, Nader Omran. Mr. Omran is quick to point out that this is not a political principle. "We are not a political festival, and we never intend to be one." "The main advantage of being independent," Kristina Davies of the Arab Arts Project adds, "lies in artistic merit." The Arab Arts Project is an Egyptian/Jordanian group of artists and friends dedicated to the promotion of "alternatives to existing relationships among artists, funders, producers and the wider society."

Officially organised festivals differ in their agendas, she explains. These may be political, commercial, or simply a matter of occasion. If the agenda of such a festival is to promote cultural exchange, for example, emphasis may be laid on choosing traditional performances, rather than cutting edge. The agendas of independent festivals are purely artistic, because they are organised by artists. Performers are invited on artistic merit, there are no other criteria or restrictions. Where this may sound unduly competitive, it in fact has the opposite effect: "The artists feel empowered because they have a say. This encourages cooperation."

The format of the festival is indeed intended to promote cooperation. The many workshops and seminars are there for groups to learn from each other. One of the stated aims of the festival is to cement a network of independent groups; a network that unofficially



Actors from Egypt's El Warsha theatre group in performance

exists, but is not yet organised.

This is one of the most successful aspects of the festival. Mrs. Davies relates how a play produced by a Jesuit school in El-Minia, three hours south of Cairo, found its way to the El-Warsha group, and from there to Palestinian and Lebanese refugee camps through festival connections. The play — "Spinning Lives" — has been one of the highlights at the festival.

Another highlight this year, was the workshop on theatre music, held by a Swedish group. It ended up a 'jam' between the Swedes and their Arab counterparts, to the immense enjoyment of both. "I think it was a very valuable lesson for us. We learnt a lot from them, especially with regards to rhythm and percussion," said Gert-Ove Wagstan.

"The cooperative aspect of the festival, is very valuable especially for Palestinian groups," contends Ninni Rydsjö of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). SIDA is Sweden's official

development agency, and Ninni Rydsjö is its Middle East cultural executive. "Other groups [from the region] are exposed to the rest of the world, but Palestinian groups do not even have exposure to their neighbours. For them it's a great opportunity to create an artistic network."

Cooperation, networking and cultural exchange is not just evident in the format of the festival, and the multinational nature of its participants, but also in the material being performed. Garcia Lorca's 'The Daughters of Bernada Elba' is being performed by an Egyptian group, Sharpnel, and Shakespeare's 'Othello' by the Tunisians, El Teatro.

All in all the festival has been proclaimed a success by organisers and participants alike. Sunday night there will be a musical performance at the Royal Cultural Centre in which all groups are expected to take part and have a party. One of those who undoubtedly will party the hardest is Nader Omran.

Monarch supports prospect of Arab summit to tackle peace

(Continued from page 1)

the end of the road but are a step on the path towards a final settlement.

Referring to his talks with President Clinton about opening direct dialogue with Iraq, King Hussein said: "I have put forth my view in all my meetings with the American officials I met with, and I believe

that the situation is quiet at present and I hope we will soon see a continuous movement towards ending the suffering of the Iraqi people because this is our main objective."

Asked about his health, the King said: "Thank God, my health is excellent and I have to take antibiotics for one more week as a precautionary measure against the micro-organ-

ism I have been suffering from."

Commenting on the situation in the occupied territories where a leading Hamas leader was assassinated, the King said: "I hope that things will not move beyond this point towards violence because we will be playing into the hands of extremists who wish that to happen to destroy the chances

for peace."

Replying to a question about the prospects of the U.S. announcing its initiative, King Hussein said: "I believe that the U.S. and the Palestinians are in continuous dialogue but what I have heard personally has given me encouragement that with God's help we will not have major obstacles in moving in the right direction."

Government orders release of most Ma'an detainees

(Continued from page 1)

for illegal arms and for residents involved in the unrest.

Over 460 weapons — which officials claimed were used by rioters during the unrest — were seized during the search along with large amounts of ammunition and 36 kilograms of narcotics. "The decision to release them came upon instructions from His Majesty King Hussein and Crown Prince Hassan," Dr. Ensour said after a weekly Cabinet meeting.

"Most of those arrested were released this morning and only a few remain in jail," he added. "They will be released either before or after the Eid Al Adha feast."

Dr. Ensour said several economic projects would be launched in Ma'an, a desert town of over 26,000 residents, to help improve the area's infrastructure and create jobs to ease soaring unemployment and poverty.

Many residents have blamed poverty for the unrest, the third since 1989 riots over price hikes helped speed up efforts to launch democracy.

Dr. Ensour said 2,500 dunums had been earmarked to house an industrial estate in Ma'an. He said the government also instructed the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) to build 900 housing units in the desolate town to benefit Ma'an resi-

dents working in the company, a major hard currency earner.

Ma'an Lower House Deputy Waleed Awajan said he and other colleagues met with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on Thursday and urged him to free the detainees.

He told the Jordan Times that over 16 men were expected to be released on Saturday, the third batch since the unrest.

He said Ma'an's three deputies were "hoping" to meet with King Hussein, who yesterday returned to Amman after working visits to Washington and London.

"We hope to meet with His Majesty in order to close the

detainee file once and for all," he added.

He said that 35 men "who refused to surrender to police," were still at large.

"We are seeking clemency from His Majesty for all those arrested after the unrest and for the 35 people who are still at large and are still wanted by the government," Dr. Awajan said.

The State Security Court on Wednesday began the trial of opposition leader Laith Shbeilat, accused of inciting riots in Ma'an with a speech he gave at a mosque a night before the unrest, urging people to demonstrate in support of Iraq, lawyers said.

If convicted, he faces up to 10 years in jail, lawyers said.

PNA demands Israel stop inflaming crisis

(Continued from page 1)

remote control. Hamas quickly accused Israel in the killing.

Palestinian police are now looking into the possibility that Sharif was shot dead by a Hamas gunman who collaborated with Israel.

In Gaza on Saturday, during a student rally at the Islamic University attended by about 1,200 marchers, Hamas leader Abdul Aziz Rantisi scoffed at the direction of the Palestinian investigation.

"We do not kill each other. The Israelis are the targets of the Izzedine Al Qassam Brigades," he said, referring to the military wing of Hamas, which has engineered more than a dozen suicide bombings in Israel since

1994. "We want revenge and a quick response to the killing of Mohieddin Al Sharif," the students chanted.

Hamas official Mr. Rantisi raised cheers from the crowd in his speech, saying: "Let Netanyahu know that we are all Ezzedin Al Qassam."

"Ezzedin Al Qassam must make good with its threats. Revenge is coming," he told the crowd. A day earlier in Gaza, Hamas threatened a worldwide bombing campaign to retaliate for Sharif's death. A new leaflet from Hamas' military wing on Friday vowed to "open a new circle of war, not only inside the homeland, but everywhere."

Mr. Rantisi accused Sharif's killers of torturing him before shooting him and

blowing him up.

Israel has assassinated a long list of Islamist activists since 1995, including the Islamic Jihad leader Fathi Shikaki and former chief Hamas bomb maker Yahiyeh Ayyash. Israel also tried to assassinate a Hamas leader in Jordan last September.

Palestinian and Israeli officials accused each other of acting irresponsibly after Sharif's demise.

Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu said in light of statements by some Palestinian officials blaming Israel, he in turn would hold the PNA responsible for any retaliatory Hamas violence.

"I would say that they ignite an already explosive atmosphere and that they could lead to the launching of terror

attacks against Israel," he told a gathering of foreign diplomats in Israel on Friday.

Palestinian officials said Mr. Netanyahu, not they, was inflaming tensions. "Netanyahu's statements are only adding fuel to the fire," said chief Palestinian peace negotiator Saeb Erekat.

"This pre-emptive declaration by Netanyahu... is certainly irresponsible and not dealing with reality," said Palestinian Higher Education Minister Hanan Ashrawi.

"The Palestinian Authority is doing everything possible to avoid further deterioration and to safeguard the peace process. But we cannot be solely responsible."



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Amendments to companies' registration fees seen as 'unwise' and 'dangerous'

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A prominent industrialist and a lawmaker Saturday described the higher registration fees on various types of companies as "unwise" and "dangerous."

The reaction came hours after the Council of Ministers approved amendments to the Companies Law which now exempts firms capitalised at more than JD50 million from registration fees.

The amendments require limited partnership companies, capitalised at less than JD10 million, to pay registration fees at the rate of JD2 per thousand dinars of capital. Firms with capital ranging from JD10 million to JD50 million will pay fees at the rate JD2 per ten thousand dinars of capital.

It also exempts the firms with capitals exceeding JD50 million from paying registration fees.

A public shareholding company has to pay a three per cent of the capital registration fee if it did not exceed JD10 million, according to the changes.

If the capital ranges between JD10 million and JD50 million the registration fee becomes two per cent. Companies capitalised at more than JD50 million were also exempted from paying registration fees.

Companies Comptroller Loay Mismar said the amendments "aims at encouraging local firms to show their real capitals."

"It also aims at attracting foreign investors to the Kingdom and making Jordan a centre for large-capital investments in the region," Mr. Mismar told

the Jordan Times.

But a source at the Amman Chamber of Industry said the amendments were targeting the small and medium firms in the country "which already suffers from recession."

"This change only encourages foreign firms with large capitals," the source, who asked not to be named, said.

"With all fairness, we can say that this law exempts large companies from paying the registration fee and put the whole burden on small and medium firms," the source added.

"It wants to give foreign firms more facilities at the cost of local companies. This decision is neither wise nor well studied," the source added.

He said that increased government burden on the shoulder of local firms have pushed them to invest in

nearby countries such as Egypt.

The well-informed source told the Jordan Times that the Jordanian investments in Cairo has increased by 20 to 30 per cent "because they found better business environment and chances in Egypt."

Deputy Munir Sobar, the rapporteur of the finance and economic committee of the Lower House, said the amendments were not justified.

"It will create additional burden on the shoulder of local firms, especially those that have capitals less than JD10 million and which constitute the bulk of companies in the Kingdom," Mr. Sobar said.

"It is a very dangerous issue which will have a negative impact on the economy and the local firms in particular," he added.

Palestinians urge WTO to protect their food and culture from Israel

CAIRO (AFP) — Palestinian officials accused Israel of robbing them of their folkloric traditions and food wealth, including the typical "hummus" dish, and called for World Trade Organisation (WTO) protection.

"We would like to preserve the national heritage of Arab countries, namely Palestinian national heritage, which Israel is stealing each day," said Omar Al Harub, director general at the Palestinian economy ministry.

Mr. Harub was speaking on the sidelines of a conference organised in Cairo last week by the WTO and the Egyptian foreign ministry on property rights.

The meeting was attended by the Palestinian representative and delegates from eight other Arab countries.

Mr. Harub said the WTO should endeavour to give Palestinians and Arabs certificates of origins for a wide range of products, including "hummus," a puree of chick peas and sesame paste.

He charged that Israel was putting its name on hundreds of Palestinian products.

For generations the Arabs have considered "hummus" as one of their most traditional dishes but Israel also disputes ownership over it.

Mr. Harub said that the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement which

was adopted in 1994 should ensure respect of the terms underlined by the U.N. Charter and protect Palestinian and Arab folk and food rights.

"Be it land, oranges, olive oil, or even hummus, the certificate of origin should be granted to Palestinians not Israel," he said.

The three-day meeting in Cairo was aimed at examining ways of implementing by the year 2000 in developing countries the TRIPS agreement which was adopted by developed countries in 1996.

"Arab countries have not yet modified their legislation to make them compatible with the norms of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and have still to define the technical assistance they need to modernise their administration," said Hossam Lotfi, of WIPO.

Mr. Lotfi urged Arab countries to respect the TRIPS agreement, saying that this will help them to attract foreign investments, allow the creation of new jobs, and increase tax revenues.

Nine Arab countries — Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Djibouti and Mauritania — are members of WIPO. Algeria, Yemen, Jordan, Oman, Sudan and Saudi Arabia are waiting for membership.

Egypt, Europe partnership stuck over agriculture

CAIRO (AFP) — Negotiations to seal a free trade agreement between Egypt and the European Union (EU) have remained stuck on agriculture issues despite European offers to defuse the crisis, an EU diplomat said.

Rene Milas, EU economic councillor in Cairo, told AFP that two days of talks in the Egyptian capital last week failed to overcome the hurdles.

"We have had extremely constructive discussions and we were flexible in order to make the Egyptians understand that we are ready to help them develop their economy," Mr. Milas said.

Mr. Milas said the EU proposed to extend the "preferential tariff" to agricultural products but that the problem remained on the quota of oranges, rice, cut flowers and potatoes which Egypt wants to

export to Europe.

Further talks are due to take place in Brussels at the end of April.

Discussions to seal a partnership agreement on trade between Egypt and Europe began three years ago and are set to end in July.

Mr. Milas said the Cairo talks also centered on the "rules of origin" which determine the origin of elements which go into any product produced in Egypt, copyright and details to scrap customs tariffs — a move that should take place 12 years after a deal is signed.

Europe is Egypt's top trading partner with bilateral trade reaching seven billion ECU (\$7.5 billion).

Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and Israel have already signed partnership agreements with Europe.

International mission identifies major barriers to set up business in Jordan

By Ghaila Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — An international mission has concluded a road map study identifying major administrative barriers hindering simplified procedures to start up a business in the areas of manufacturing, transport and tourism.

Foreign investors have often complained of government bureaucracy and red tape as impediments to establishing their businesses in Jordan.

Head of the mission, Xian Shen, told a meeting attended by Industry, Trade and Supply Minister Hani Mulki on Saturday that the study seeks to ease and streamline investment procedures and sets an agenda for the removal of all barriers.

"Any investor is required to obtain 16 approvals" before starting a business in Jordan, said Ms. Shen.

"Many approvals do not have clear purpose. Some reapprovals and final approvals are redundant and are not even essential," she added.

Criteria and procedures for approvals are often vague and self-conflicting, said Ms. Shen adding that information is not always available for investors.

Dr. Mulki agreed that some approvals are unnecessary and said the government will look into granting the Invest-

ment Promotion Corporation (IPC) the authority to issue pre-approvals for investors.

But, he added, final approvals should be obtained from the concerned authorities.

Dr. Mulki told the meeting that a specialised book detailing all the information about required procedures to set-up a business in Jordan should be distributed to investors.

The study was conducted by the Foreign International Advisory Service (FIAS) — an affiliate of the World Bank — and the Technical Service Group (TSG) consultants working with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), in collaboration with the IPC.

Ms. Shen said the lack of coordination and coherence among the involved entities "causes confusion and constitutes a big administrative barrier."

According to the study, which focused on Greater Amman, Aqaba and Jordan Valley regions, general approval and registration requirements are unnecessarily complex.

"A different form to register each possible type of company is not necessary. One form could serve the purpose," the study said.

It suggested that some directorates which process applications should be com-

bined in order to facilitate procedures.

A member of the mission told the meeting that investors who wish to acquire land face stringent conditions.

He said procedures at regional authorities are straightforward. However, he added, leases are not readily transferable, sub-letting opportunities are extremely limited and the lessor has no property rights at the end of the lease term.

Third parties, such as financial institutions are reluctant to grant construction loans, according to the study. Such parties, it said, should be able to step in to protect their rights after satisfying the lessor's interest.

The mission acknowledged that a recent Cabinet decision which allowed the Jordan Valley Authority to sell land as a step towards the right direction. However, it said, there is an urgent need to further clarify specific policies and procedures.

The study has identified some shortcomings pertaining to the construction stage of a particular project, namely the lack of clear guidelines on investors' rights and obligations as well as the general shortage of infrastructure support.

The study suggested that import duties be simplified in order to save with customs

procedures — a problem reported by many foreign investors.

It noted that sales tax on imports also "marginalises the significance of tariff reductions."

The Lower House of Parliament is currently debating a new customs law which the study expects to bring about "significant reforms."

The road map study recommended continued commitment to policy and procedural reforms, greater transparency, building a consensus at all levels of government regarding the private sector and upgrading information system as well as staff training.

According to Dr. Mulki "if we are to encourage more investments in Jordan, we have to create a suitable climate in the services sector."

IPC Deputy Director General Reem Badran told the meeting that the corporation has started offering "big" investors professional services through its one-stop-service programme.

She told the Jordan Times that the cost of the road map study was totally covered by FIAS and the USAID.

The mission is expected to submit a final report to the government in July. TSG/FIAS team will return to Jordan in August to conduct several workshops with the aim of reporting findings and recommendations.

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

1. Flick youngsters
6. Sleep outdoors
10. French cop: slang
14. Eye: pret.
15. Spoken
16. Actress Turner
17. Ride a bike
18. Josip Broz
19. Burden
20. Type of impromptu party
23. Gossips
26. Word with up or fruit
27. Runs like colors
28. Scrutinize
31. Singer Anita
32. Ring in the ocean
33. Tax adviser: abbr.
36. Wearing one's birthday suit
40. Snaky lum
41. Two to one, e.g.
42. Ardently eager
43. Unit of capacitance
44. Strut
46. Like a temporary committee
49. Pittsburgh griddle
50. Designer's one of a kind
54. Skin problem
55. Trek of "Jeopardy"
56. Chick calls
60. Lift-off pressure
61. M. Descartes
62. Fairy-tale monsters
63. Formerly, formerly
64. Former mates
65. Russian rulers

DOWN

1. Hang loosely
2. Top trump
3. Wet soil
4. Shiner

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, APRIL 5, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Your idea of romance is to slay the dragon and save the innocent victim. Well, there could be somebody in your life who needs rescuing. Look around and see if you can find a damsel or a gorgeous stud mufin in distress. In this day and age, women get to be heroes, too.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You've been putting up with arguments from loved ones for the past several weeks. Well, you'll see less of that, those who love you will treat you with more respect and are more likely to go along with your agenda. In return, listen to their advice.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) This should be a great day for sports and parties. If it's been a while since you've seen your siblings, get together with them. They may have something important to teach you. This could happen through a friendly competition.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You like to fuss over people. Sometimes they see this as meddling in their affairs. But in the coming weeks, people will really appreciate the things you do for them, and that will make you feel a lot better right there.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) This is the best day you've had all week for sports. Romance could become a little more difficult in the next few weeks, however. People will be a little more sensitive than usual. It wouldn't hurt to take a little gift to your sweetheart this evening.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) It will be easier to form partnerships during the next few weeks. You feel like you don't have enough time. But if you take on a partner, voila! You can split up duties and get more done. Everyone lives happily ever after.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You could fall in love with someone who's taking care of you. It would probably be a pretty good match. This is an appropriate time for you to learn how to take care of other people, too. It's a different concept, but it can be quite satisfying.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) This will be a wonderful phase for making romantic commitments. That may be a challenge today, however. You want to be in control of the romantic situation. If the deal you're offered today isn't enough to your liking, just stall.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) This is a great day for sports activities, travel and games. Is there a Cub Scout group around that you could take for a walk in the country? You'd be great at that, and they would have an absolutely marvellous time.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Something you've been meaning to do is demanding your attention. The first thing that will happen is that you'll have a big mess. That's OK. You're going to have to break several eggs before you get that omelet, remember?

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Unexpected news from a friend this morning could cause a change to your plans this evening. That's OK. You like excitement, remember? You might temporarily forget that, in a moment of irritation.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You're encouraging others to have fun while you're knocking yourself out to make sure they do. Your service will not go unrewarded. The paycheck may not all come in folding green, but it will definitely come. Practice getting used to abundance.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"Medical experts say an aspirin a day can prevent heart attacks if you have it for lunch instead of a cheeseburger."

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

HOCAP

YEHRM

DALLIP

DEFAUL

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here:

Yesterday's Jumbles: HUMAN PENCE JAILED COMPLY

Answer: What he did when the checkers champ invited him to play — "JUMPED" AT THE CHANCE

Business

A review of ne

Aqaba Port reg

it handled 12.3m

THE PORT

REUTERS

The Business

Major Currencies & Cross Rates	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF
1 Dollar	1.0000	1.6366	0.6933	0.7566
1 Mark	0.5456	1.0000	0.3363	0.3758
1 Sterling	1.5548	2.6360	1.0000	1.1036
1 Franc	0.9375	1.6128	0.3946	1.0000
1 Yen	0.0074	0.0126	0.0034	0.0037
1 Lira	0.0002	0.0003	0.0001	0.0001
1 Dollar	0.0002	0.0003	0.0001	0.0001
1 Pound	0.0002	0.0003	0.0001	0.0001
1 Franc	0.0002	0.0003	0.0001	0.0001

Energy	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF
1 Barrel	1.4154	2.3190	0.9505	1.0371
1 Tonne	0.2556	0.4301	0.1758	0.1901
1 Tonne	2.55	4.306	1.758	1.901
1 Tonne	0.2748	0.4647	0.1867	0.2022
1 Tonne	0.2564	0.4319	0.1769	0.1904
1 Tonne	0.2723	0.4592	0.1857	0.2017
1 Tonne	0.95	1.6462	0.6564	0.7127
1 Tonne	0.2525	0.4274	0.1752	0.1897

Index	Value
DOW JONES	5920.47
S&P 500	1122.7
FT-SE 100	3264.7
NIKKEI 225	15517.78
CAC 40	3222.00
DAY	3222.00

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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Aqaba Port registers slight growth as it handled 12.3m tonnes of goods in '97

**** THE PORT OF Aqaba registered slight growth in 1997 but did not benefit much from the shipments of goods going to Baghdad on the basis of the oil-for-food accord in implementation since late 1996. According to port officials, the volume of goods passing through Aqaba amounted to 12.3 million tonnes last year, 2.5 per cent higher than the volume in 1996.**

According to the registers of the Ports Corporation, the number of vessels that docked at Jordan's only seaport has risen by 10 per cent, from 2,735 ships in 1996 to 2,997 in 1997. The registers also showed that the number of passengers who used the seaport went down from 1,107,073 persons in 1996 to 863,565 passengers in 1997.

Despite the slight increase in the volume of goods passing through Aqaba, the amount was below the levels recorded in the '80s when most of the imports/exports to/from Iraq passed through the Jordanian port. "Aqaba did not actually benefit since the oil-for-food agreement was implemented except through wheat and grain shipments coming to Iraq from the West," indicated Tawfik Kwar, the vice president of the Association of Shipping Agents.

Mr. Kwar told the AFP news agency that most of the contracts approved by the U.N. Sanctions Committee were from Southwest Asia and, as such, the shipments arrive through Dubai to the Iraqi port of Um Qasr where shipment and handling fees are paid in Iraqi dinars.

Before the imposition of sanctions on Baghdad, Aqaba enjoyed a record prosperity period. In 1988, the volume of goods that passed through the port reached 20.1 million tonnes, 60 per cent more than the volume recorded in 1997.

Mr. Kwar and Ports Corporation Director General Mohammad Dalabeh, however, expect an increase in the activity at the port in the future in light of the U.N. permission that allowed Iraq to hike its oil exports from \$2 billion to \$5.2 billion. Mr. Dalabeh saw Iraqi imports rising in the coming period and noted that Iraqi ports cannot accommodate such a large volume. "Aqaba will remain the most efficient among the ports of the region," he emphasised.

Referring to the drop in the number of passengers, a spokesman at the port attributed the decline to the opening of a new marine transport line between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. "This line has attracted passengers who used the port of Aqaba before," he said. Mr. Kwar attributed the decline to the Luxor massacre where 58 tourists were killed last November. "Between 10 to 15 tourist boats stopped sailing since that massacre after they were operating on the marine line between Jordan and Egypt."

Mr. Kwar perceived some signs of improvements in tourism for 1998 as, until now, three large tourist vessels have docked at Aqaba (Al Ra'i + Al Dostour)

Cement directors prefer local private sector to buy government equity

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government is reconsidering its decision to sell 33 per cent of its shares in the Jordan Cement Factories Company (JCFC) to strategic foreign partners, official sources have said.

As part of the government's privatisation plans, the government has announced earlier this year that it is going to sell 33 per cent of its shares to strategic foreign partners. The government owns 49 per cent of the JCFC.

The company's board of directors is pursuing contacts with the government to convince it to sell its shares to the private sector in Jordan, as well as to the company's workers and staff.

Board Chairman Hamdi Tabba'a said in a statement to the Arabic daily Al Ra'i that the company does not see any real need for selling the government shares, adding that the board strongly supports selling part of the government's shares to private sector institutions, and another part for Jordanian citizens and Arab investors.

The company in 1997 achieved net profits of JD11.9 million and will distribute dividends at a rate of 11 per cent to shareholders as profits.

The company's fixed assets have increased by about JD5.7 million bringing up total assets to JD 277.9 million.

Cement sales in Jordan amounted to 2.2 million tonnes, compared with approximately 975,500 tonnes sold in outside markets.

Europe high-tech industry faces skills shortage crisis

GENEVA (AFP) — Leading technologists warned that a severe shortage of skilled workers in Europe could hinder the growth of its high-tech industry if no remedial action is taken. "A skills shortage could limit the future growth of Europe's high-tech industry unless it is addressed now," said Semiconductor Equipment and Materials International, an organisation which groups some 2,100 suppliers of materials and equipment for the semi-conductor industry.

A coalition of trade associations at the annual semiconductor fair in Geneva, SEMICON Europa, called for cooperation and action among the private sector, European governments and academia to investigate solutions. The European Union (EU) has 17.5 million unemployed people "while at the same time high-tech companies are predicting thousands of vacancies they can't fill," SEMI President Stan Myers said.

The shortage of technology workers is forecast to get worse by 2005 unless action is taken, Mr. Myers warned, predicting that firms would invest in other parts of the world where skilled labour was more abundant if they could not meet their recruitment needs in Europe.

Such a development would be bad news for the EU, since the market for consumer electronic products is expected to reach \$1.5 trillion in the next five to six years, representing the world's biggest industrial sector.

"Right now there's a huge mismatch between available skills and available jobs, and that can't continue indefinitely. In global businesses like electronics and semiconductors, the manufacturers will go where the labour resources are."

SEMI has launched a so-called "skilled technology workforce" initiative with the support of eight other trade associations.

A taskforce has been set up to examine the causes of the problem and possible solutions. Experts hope to present some recommendations to the European Commission, Europe's national governments and education organisations in the autumn.

Mr. Myers said it was not just a question of creating more university places for science and technology students, since in Germany alone there are 4,000 unfilled places in software engineering courses.

"We've got to create the desire among Europeans — students and older people alike — to pursue careers in the industries that need skilled labour."

Israeli businessmen visit government entities, free zone and industrial estates

AMMAN (J.T.) — A delegation of Israeli businessmen representing 18 leading companies in Israel concluded a two-day visit to Jordan where they discussed bilateral cooperation in industrial and commercial fields.

The 27 Israeli businessmen, whose visit was arranged by the Jordanian embassy in Tel Aviv and the Israeli embassy in Amman, had meeting with several Jordanian business people and discussed ways of launching future joint ventures.

The delegation also visited the several government departments and institutions, paid a short visit to the Sahab Industrial Estate and inspected joint ventures at Zarqa Free Zone area and Al Hassan Industrial Estate in the northern city of Irbid.

The delegation also visited the Investment Promotion Corporation where they were briefed about Jordan's investment climate and the incentives brought about by the new Investment Promotion Law.

According to Shaoul Sasson, director of the Israeli Trade Office at the Israeli Embassy, this was the first "independent business delegation to visit Jordan."

Mr. Sasson expects this delegation to be followed by many others who have already shown interest in investing in Jordan.

REUTERS The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.9360	0.6933	0.7566	133.62	0.7106	1936.27	2.3636	6.5596
DE Mark	0.5193	1.0000	0.3363	0.3536	65.54	0.4803	193.63	2.3636	3.4076
GB Sterling	1.5478	3.0691	1.0000	0.7866	166.63	0.7706	193.63	2.3636	10.2738
CH Franc	0.6933	1.3213	0.3946	1.0000	136.76	0.7566	193.63	2.3636	0.6933
JP Yen	0.0074	1.5888	0.0044	0.0074	1.0000	0.0071	193.63	2.3636	0.0074
CA Dollar	0.7106	1.4048	0.4231	0.4536	1.0000	0.7106	193.63	2.3636	0.7106
IT Lira	0.0002	0.0004	0.0001	0.0002	0.0001	0.0002	1.0000	2.3636	0.0002
NL Guilder	0.0036	0.0072	0.0024	0.0036	0.0036	0.0036	1.0000	2.3636	0.0036
FR Franc	0.0165	0.0330	0.0104	0.0165	0.0165	0.0165	1.0000	2.3636	0.0165

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7080	3.7503	0.3770	0.3410	0.3062	0.3728	1628.00	3.4180
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	1.0000	5.2896	0.5317	0.4818	0.4318	0.5103	2185.15	4.8209
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1891	1.0000	0.1006	0.097	0.0816	0.08	407.43	0.9114
Bahraini Dinar	2.65	1.8806	9.9477	1.0000	0.96	0.8121	0.74	4063.05	8.9683
Qatar Dinar	0.2746	0.1947	1.0300	1.0300	1.0000	0.8841	1.01	418.88	0.9388
Kuwait Dinar	3.2684	2.3189	12.2489	1.2314	1.189	1.0000	1.200	4991.02	0.9388
Emirate Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0211	1.0206	0.9913	0.8834	1.00	418.03	0.9306
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4640	2.4644	0.2467	0.2389	0.2004	2.4037	1.00	2.2389
Egyptian	0.2526	0.2074	1.0972	0.1103	1.0652	0.8896	1.0745	447.05	1.00

Energy			Mid-East Currencies					
Oil	Last	review	Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
Brent	13.65	13.49	SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4933	0.16075	0.40717	36.0933
W. Texas	16.04	16.00	AE Dirham	0.2723	0.50376	0.16414	0.41577	36.8541
Bonny	13.65	13.49	KW Dinar	3.2684	6.4233	1.96928	4.88753	442.087
Dubai	12.16	12.01	BH Dinar	0.3770	4.90677	1.59888	4.05022	368.066
Ull. Gas	151.00	151.00	CY Pound	1.8509	3.4236	1.1151	2.8245	250.445

Metal Prices		
Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	308	308.5
Silver (oz's)	8.5	8.55
Platinum (oz's)	412	414
AL (3 Months)	1413	1416
CU (3 Months)	1700	1705
Zinc (3 Months)	1119	1123
Lead (3 Months)	891	894
NI (3 Months)	8370	8400

Labor Fixing				
Period	- 1 -	- 3 -	- 6 -	- 1 -
Cncy	Month	Months	Months	Year
USD	5.8875	6.7578	5.7969	5.8828
GBP	7.5156	7.5833	7.5833	7.5338
JPY	0.7396	0.7917	0.7917	0.7917
DEM	3.6374	3.7375	3.8248	3.9825
FRF	3.2313	1.6719	1.7813	1.9219
CHF	1.8625	3.8133	3.7188	3.9063
ITL	5.6990	5.3630	5.0300	-

Main Equity Indices							
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls
NewYork	DOW JONES	8983.41	-3.23	-0.04	9030.49	8948.29	8986.64
Newyork	S&P 500	1122.7	2.89	0.26	1126.36	1118.12	1120.01
London	FT-SE 100	6064.2	11.4	0.19	6106.3	6024.5	6052.8
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	15517.78	-185.12	-1.18	15696.3	15465.1	15702.9
Paris	CAC 40	3832.02	-3.86	-0.1	3887.82	3818.41	3836.88
Frankfurt	DAX	8223.82	48.56	0.59	8248.04	8203.58	8176.65

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET										
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDANIAN										
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179										
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 04/04/1998										
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
346.000	251.000	ARAB BANK	13.9	1.18	23	880	298610	334.50	340.00	5.50+
2.340	1.660	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	12	19786	74103	1.67	1.72	.05+
S 3.540	2.250	BANK OF JORDAN	4.2	0.00	9	4000	5395	1.35	1.34	-.01-
S 1.680	1.050	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	8.1	0.01	11	4682	8195	1.75	1.76	.01+
S 5.300	4.660	THE HOUSING BK.	17.1	2.24	85	36450	196298	5.20	5.40	.20+
S 4.180	1.810	JOR. KIWAT BANK	8	0.00	2	85	149	1.85	1.82	-.03-
930	500	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	3.7	11.29	6	3184	1950	1.62	1.62	-
4.020	1.950	JOR. INV. FIN. BANK	8.8	0.00	1	850	1647	1.95	1.93	-.02-
3.900	2.070	JOR. INV. FIN. BANK	12.7	0.00	1	100	197	2.07	1.97	-1.0-
N 2.350	1.000	JOR. INV. FIN. BANK/NEW	5	0.00	2	374	606	1.71	1.62	-.09-
1.400	800	BEIT-AL-KAL (BEITRA)	5	18.29	3	2000	1640	1.84	1.82	-.02-
BANK SECTOR TOTALS										
2.400	1.590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.6	12.38	6	11750	23828	2.03	2.02	-.01-
2.350	1.800	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	8.4	0.00	7	55247	116019	2.10	2.10	-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS										
2.140	1.550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	10.2	4.72	9	22500	47912	2.10	2.12	.02+
5.500	2.450	HINER MINERALS	46.9	0.00	3	1630	6971	4.29	4.29	-
1.550	930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	41.9	0.00	18	10375	10811	1.02	1.02	-.03-
1.480	1.120	MID. EAST HOTELS	17.5	0.00	2	1000	1148	1.13	1.15	.02+
4.600	2.390	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	12.0	1.93	4	482	2006	4.17	4.15	-.02-
1.090	900	ZARQA EDUCATION	16.7	0.00	6	2450	2328	0.96	0.95	.01-
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS										
4.160	980	ATTANQUES	9	0.00	3	13086	14393	1.10	1.10	-
1.140	2.690	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	18.3	4.04	17	18018	49055	2.73	2.72	-.01-
4.140	3.050	JOR. PHOSPHATE MFG.	8.9	3.12	4	2750	8823	3.20	3.21	.01+
7.050	5.620	ARAB PETROL CO.	14.3	2.24	2	15000	8500	5.75	5.90	.15+
11.160	9.200	JOR. PETROL REFINERY	10.3	8.35	4	5080	54352	10.65	10.65	-
2.260	1.100	INDUSTRIAL COMM. AG.	9	0.00	6	2300	2912	1.29	1.29	-
5.700	3.400	ARAB PHARM. MFG.	14.4	3.82	44	17850	92548	5.14	5.23	.09+
6.350	4.400	DAR ALDANA DV. INV.	6.9	6.14	1	2000	11400	5.70	5.70	-
3.420	2.220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	6.6	8.93	1	600	1680	2.81	2.80	-.01-
3.420	2.220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	15.6	0.00	17	17250	5693	4.49	4.49	-
4.100	2.800	ARAB PAPER CONV. TRD.	20.5	0.00	5	2000	3350	1.70	1.67	-.03-
1.110	680	NATIONAL INDS.	9	0.00	1	500	275	0.55	0.55	-
810	370	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	17	17250	6900	0.40	0.40	-
690	500	JOR. ROYAL JDS.	9	0.00	2	1000	523	0.53	0.52	-.01-
S 3.000	920	NATL. CABLE WIRE. MFG.	27.0	0.00	2	1000	719	1.13	1.12	-.01-
1.560	1.150	ARAB PHARM. CONV.	9	0.00	11	12400	2807	1.31	1.31	-
1.060	470	KAWTHAR INVEST.	16.7	5.34	10	2150	1525	0.72	0.72	-
1.230	690	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	9.7	13.89	19	18700	13381	1.46	1.47	.03+
1.620	1.350	NATL. CHEMICALS	13.9	4.76	1	400	588	1.02	1.02	-
1.080	610	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	14.4	0.00	12	11750	12033	1.02	1.02	-
1.880	1.290	EL - SAY READY WEAR	47.2	0.00	1	690	871	1.34	1.34	-
1.250	1.080	UNION TOBACCO	6.5	0.00	19	249800	289944	1.18	1.18	-
1.220	860	UNION CO. & VEG.	47.3	0.00	8	14100	14447	1.03	1.03	-.01-
860	660	UNION CO. & VEG.	9.3	8.43	3	5719	5564	0.83	0.83	-
810	570	MID.EAST COMPLEX	7.6	16.13	2	2000	1235	0.62	0.62	-
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS										
2.400	1.590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.6	12.38	6	11750	23828	2.03	2.02	-.01-
2.350	1.800	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	8.4	0.00	7	55247	116019	2.10	2.10	-
GRAND TOTAL										
INDEX: 109.96	CHNG: +1.15	222	431556	688753						
INDEX: 168.74	CHNG: +1.41	456	609379	1448559						
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 04/04/1998										
1.100	1.050	ISLAMIC INSURANCE CO	P	0.00	4	15810	14733	1.10	1.16	.06+
530	340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9	0.00	4	17950	7001	0.99	0.99	-
8	660	UNION INV. 502	9	0.00	41	23070	60277	1.35	1.47	.02+
620	360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	24	20811	8520	0.43	0.42	-.01-
1.000	720	AL-SHARQ INV. CO.	9	0.00	3	6500	1600	1.00	1.00	-
780	610	AL-DAMLIYAH	8	0.00	2	4500	688	0.68	0.68	-
290	120	JOR. INDUS. MATCH-TECHNO	9	0.00	10	14650	2165	0.67	0.68	.01+
240	120	ARAB INV. TRD. INC.	43.8	0.00	1	2000	760	0.38	0.38	-
750	360	NATL. MUD. ENG. MARITIME	13	12.09	13	12091	45094	0.38	0.38	-
690	580	MIDEAST PHARM. 303	9	0.00	6	3645	1873	0.62	0.62	-.01-
510	800	UNION TOBACCO 752	9	0.00	3	1236	1556	1.51	1.51	-
730	550	RASI PHARM.	11	0.00	11	5080	5384	0.61	0.61	-
N 950	550	ADVANCED PHARM. IND.	9	0.00	11	10010	5149	0.68	0.67	-.01-
4	140	AL-SHARQ INV. CO.	9	0.00	9	14300	6980	0.44	0.44	-
N 1.000	660	NATL. ALUMINUM. 752	46.2	0.00	14	13850	17258	0.61	0.61	-
N 1.310	1.000	KUTRIJAH	P	0.00	3	1000	1050	1.05	1.05	-
N 1.000	750	KEMAL PRINT CO. 752	13.2	8.71	1	100	62	0.92	0.87	-.05-
GRAND TOTAL										
					162	397393	144614			
I = New 12 months high										
4 = New 12 months low										
S = Stock dividend during the past 12 months										
N = Listed during the past 12 months										
P = P/E ratio is 10.0 or more										
+ = Negative P/E										
Z = Earning is zero or N/A for the most recent year										

Davis Cup

Woodies give Australia edge over Zimbabwe

MILDURA (AFP) — Mark Woodforde and Todd Woodbridge recorded a straight sets doubles win over the Black brothers to give Australia the edge in their Davis Cup World Group first round tennis tie over Zimbabwe on Saturday.

Australia took the initiative to lead the tie 2-1 when the Woodforges, nine-time grand slam champions, eclipsed Byron and Wayne Black 6-4, 7-6 (8/6), 6-2 in two hours 15 minutes in the pivotal doubles rubber.

U.S. Open champion Pat Rafter had denied Australia's confidence in the opening singles on Friday when he lost to Byron Black in four sets after Jason Stoltenberg had opened the tie with a win over Wayne Black on his fifth match point.

Australia will wrap up the tie on Sunday against the World Group newcomers should either world number four Rafter or Stoltenberg win either of the reverse sin-

gles to set up a home quarter-final against Italy or India in July.

Woodbridge, the dominant player in Saturday's doubles, said the Australian team had been stunned by Rafter's loss and had used the extra pressure on them to focus on victory.

"We were both feeling pretty confident we would get through it but with the score at one-all it put a bit more pressure on us," Woodbridge said.

"That's why we ended up playing as well as we did today. We kept our nose to the grindstone and never let them in."

"We knew they were going to make us work for it. I don't think we played our best but we never had a lull or a down period."

The key point for Australia, according to Woodbridge, came when Zimbabwe held a set point at 6-5 in the second set tiebreaker. But Woodforde levelled the scores with a reflex volley after an

exchange at the net.

Byron Black went on to double fault on set point to give the home side the tiebreak 8-6.

There was only one break of serve in the opening set, in the 10th game when the Australian duo broke Byron Black's serve to take the first set 6-4.

Australia raced through the third set with service breaks in the third and fifth games as the Black brothers began to tire.

"We didn't want to give them any sniff of a chance," Woodforde said.

"If we'd lost the game they would have had plenty of reason to topple this great Australian team with all these fine players."

"Now the pressure's back on them and we'll see how they handle it."

Saturday's victory made the Woodforges Australia's all-time champion Davis Cup combination, winning their 11th match to eclipse the 1950s combination of John Crawford and Adrian

Quist, who held the previous record of 10-1.

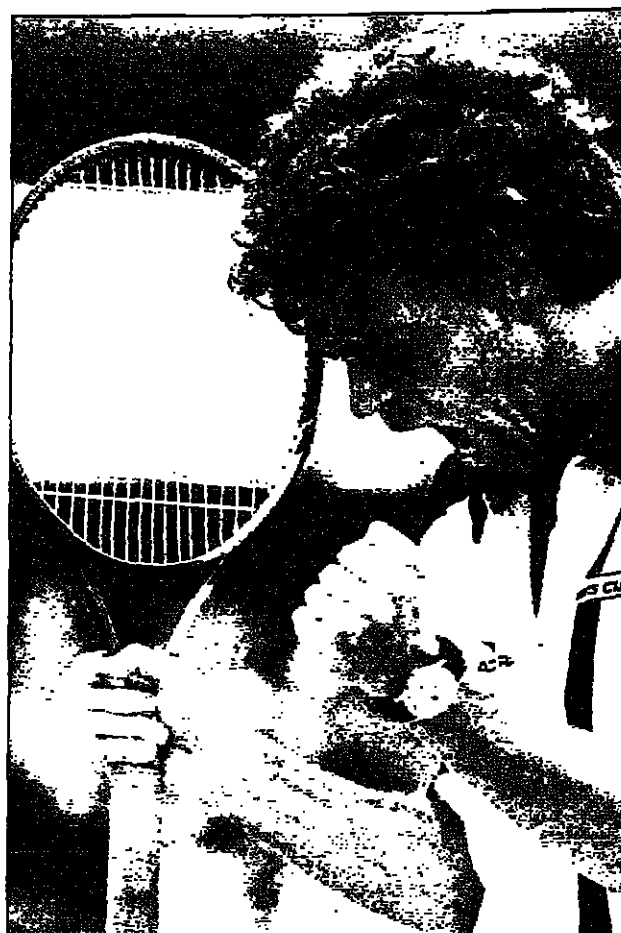
Byron Black said that while the first set was tight he and his brother could never string enough points together to have a break chance.

He said the pair, who had only lost one of their 11 previous Davis Cup doubles matches, were weary after playing three successive matches despite their renewed endurance.

"Our bodies are a little tired and a little sore but mentally we've got to stay fresh," he said.

"It's very tough to come out fighting three days in a row at this level. More often than not you're going to have a letdown and I think today was our letdown."

Wayne Black will strive to keep the tie alive in the first of the reverse singles against Rafter on Sunday while Byron takes on Stoltenberg in the fifth rubber.



Gustavo Kuerten of Brazil celebrates after he defeated Carlos Moya of Spain in their first match of the Davis Cup World Group, in Porto Alegre April 3. Kuerten defeated Moya in straight sets 5-7 1-6 6-4 6-4 6-4 (Reuters photo)



Russian Davis Cup player Yevgeny Kafelnikov bites on his racket as the rain begins to fall during a warm-up for the first round of the Davis Cup tennis tournament between Russia and the United States at the International Tennis Center of Stone Mountain (Reuters photo)

Davenport ousted as Seles survives

HILTON HEAD (AFP) — Top seed Lindsay Davenport of the United States faltered down the stretch but third-seeded compatriot Monica Seles survived a scare Friday in the quarter-finals of the Family Circle Cup.

Davenport squandered a 6-3 lead in the third-set tiebreaker before falling to ninth seed Irina Spirlea of Romania, 6-7 (3/7), 6-4, 7-6 (8/6). Seles, competing in only her second tournament of the year, advanced to the semi-finals by outlasting Patty Schnyder of Switzerland, 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (8/6).

Davenport, ranked second in the world behind Martina Hingis, committed 10 double faults as she lost for only the sixth time in 27 matches this season. Spirlea will face Seles on Saturday for a berth in Sunday's final.

Seles is a former top-ranked player who lost to Hingis in last year's final. She made her 1998 debut at last week's Lipton Championships, falling to eventual finalist Anna Kournikova of Russia in the third round. She missed the early part of the season to be with her cancer-stricken father Karolj.

Ewing wants to return for final week of season

NEW YORK (AFP) — Injured Knicks center Patrick Ewing, who was expected to be sidelined for the rest of the year after wrist surgery, reportedly hopes to return for the final week of the National Basketball Association season.

Ewing participated in shooting drills prior to Thursday night's 81-70 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers. Although Ewing did not address the media after the workout, it is believed that Ewing is hoping to return to the lineup on April 14 when the Knicks host the Washington Wizards.

"Right now, I would say that's the date," a club official told the New York Daily News. "That's what he wants."

Ewing, an 11-time All-Star, suffered a dislocated right wrist in a December 20 game at Milwaukee and underwent what was believed to be season-ending surgery the following day. However, he had the cast and three pins removed from the wrist on February 15 and has made remarkable progress over the past six weeks.

Ewing still must be cleared by doctors to return and will likely participate in a few practices before any determination will be made on his status.

French can expect 150 British hooligans

PARIS (AFP) — Some 150 hard-core British hooligans known to police are expected to descend on France for the World Cup, a senior British police officer said here Friday.

Chief superintendent Eddy Curtis, in Paris to liaise with French counterparts, said

potential troublemakers had been classified in three groups according to the danger they present.

Curtis said that 180 belonged to the most dangerous group C, but "some will be unable to come to France" as they are already subject to certain

restrictions such as reporting to a police station on matchdays.

Speaking at a meeting of police officers from 14 European nations whose teams will compete in this summer's tournament, Curtis said the 150 identified hooligans would be carefully monitored once in France.

"Most will come to France without tickets. They think they will be able to buy some from other supporters," Curtis explained, adding that British

police would cooperate fully with French officers to pinpoint known hooligans turning up at matches.

"These people are for the most part aged between 35 and 45 and have a job. They want to be a part of something, to play at soldiers," said Curtis, drawing up a profile of the "typical" hooligan. And he was adamant there was only one way to deal with them. "Lock them in. It's the only thing they understand."

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SCOREBOARD

NBA			
Washington	120	Toronto	112
Atlanta	96	Houston	87
Charlotte	96	Indiana	89
Philadelphia	93	LA Clippers	78
LA Lakers	105	Cleveland	93
Boston	101	Detroit	100
Chicago	107	Minnesota	93
Utah	97	Denver	79
Portland	109	Dallas	102
Seattle	138	Vancouver	98
Milwaukee	87	Sacramento	86

NHL			
Buffalo	5	Boston	4
Ottawa	4	New Jersey	2
Edmonton	3	Dallas	1
Phoenix	6	Anaheim	3

Portuguese League			
Farense	1	FC Porto	2

Belgian League			
Harelbeke	2	Standard Liege	0

Bundesliga			
Karlsruhe SC	0	Hertha Berlin	2
MSV Duisburg	1	Kaiserslautern	1

Davis Cup			
World Group			

Italy 1 India 1			
Andrea Gaudenzi (Ita) bt Prahlad Srinath (Ind)	6-0, 6-2, 1-6, 6-2		
Mahesh Bhupathi (Ind) bt Davide Sangumetti (Ita)	6-4, 6-4, 6-4		

Belgium 1 Netherlands 1			
Filip Dewulf (Bel) bt Sjeng Schalken (Ned)	7-5, 6-2, 7-5		
Jan Siemerink (Ned) bt Johan Van Herck (Bel)	6-4, 6-3, 4-6, 6-1		

Asia-Oceania Group II			
Pakistan 3-Pacific Oceania 0			

Mohammad Khaliq and Asim Shafiq (Pakistan) beat Lawrence Terc and Sanjeev Tikaram			
7-5, 6-4, 6-2, 7-6 (8/6)			

Taiwan 2-Hong Kong			
Lin Bing-chao, Chen Chih-jung (Tpe) bt Christopher Lai, Stephen So (HK)	6-3, 6-1, 6-1		

Asia Oceania Group I (second round)			
Japan 2 New Zealand 1			

Brett Steven/James Greenhalgh (NZ) bt Takao Suzuki/Satoshi Iwabuchi (Jpn)			
4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-3			

Goichi Motomura (Jpn) bt Teo Susnjak (Nzl)			
6-0, 6-0, 6-0			

Takao Suzuki (Jpn) bt Brett Steven (Nzl)			
7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5), 7-5			

GOREN BRIDGE			
WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANJAVI HURCH			

RIGHT SUIT AT THE RIGHT TIME			
Both vulnerable. North deals.			

NORTH			
♠ K J 10 7			
♥ Q J 2			
♦ A 10			
♣ A K 8 2			

WEST			
♠ 8 5 3			
♥ 9 7 6			
♦ 10 8 5 3			
♣ 5 2			

EAST			
♠ A 9 6 2			
♥ 10 5 3			
♦ Q 7			
♣ J 10 9 3			

SOUTH			
♠ Q 4			
♥ 8 4			
♦ 9 6 4 2			
♣ Q 7 6 4			

The bidding:			
NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♠	Pass	2NT	Pass

Opening lead: Five of ♣			
If you think you are a master technician, cover the East-West cards and plan the play of this hand at three no trump after a diamond lead. There are two problems to surmount: What do you play to the first trick, and how to take advantage of any favorable lie of the cards to secure nine tricks.			

North-South were employing a range of 15-17 for a one-no-trump opening bid, hence North's one club. The rest of the auction was text.			
---	--	--	--

Neither The first choice is to test clubs by cashing the queen and ace. Only when West discards on the second club does declarer have to resort to the majors. If East has the king of hearts, there is no problem. But if East holds the ace of spades and West the king of hearts, it is essential to knock out West's entry first. (If West holds both, go down quietly.) Therefore, run the queen of hearts now.			
--	--	--	--

That loses to the king and a diamond is led to the queen. But West has no entry back and, after forcing out the ace of spades, nine tricks are in the bank.			
---	--	--	--

The Hawks 107, Rock 93			
In a game that was a tactical battle, the Hawks defeated the Rock 107-93 in a closely contested match.			

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The Hawks 107, Rock 93			
In a game that was a tactical battle, the Hawks defeated the Rock 107-93 in a closely contested match.			

Braves

Phillies

Lakers

Hawks

Raptors

Cavaliers

Pacers

Bulls

Mavericks

Timberwolves

Grizzlies

Jazz

Suns

Warriors

Clippers

Knicks

Pistons

Rockets

Magic

Heat

Celtics

Hornets

Trail Blazers

Thunder

Lakers

Hawks

Braves beat Phillies 5-1

CHICAGO (AP) — The Chicago Cubs honoured the late Harry Caray the way he would have wanted — with a victory in their home opener.

Pitcher Steve Trachsel drove in three runs with a pair of singles and allowed just four hits and two runs over 7 1/3 innings as the Cubs beat the Montreal Expos 6-2 on a frosty Friday at Wrigley Field.

The one thing missing was Caray, the legendary Hall of Fame broadcaster, who was more popular than many of the players he described — and often criticized — on TV and radio. Caray died in February and the fans gathered Friday to say one more goodbye.

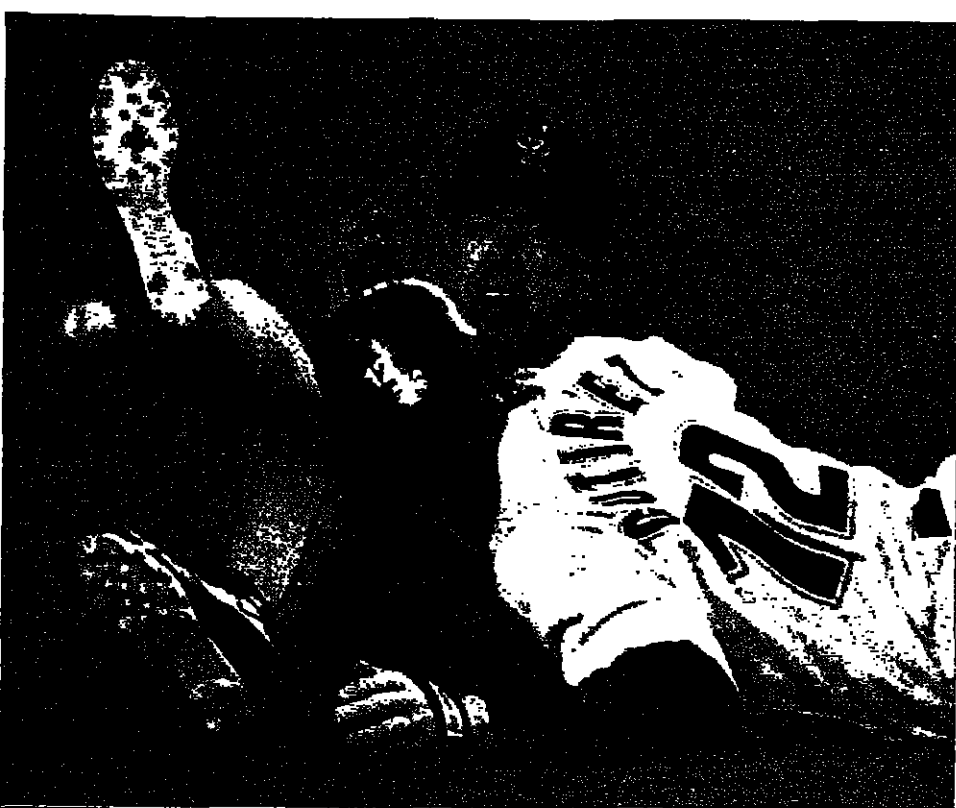
In the top of the seventh with two outs, the sellout crowd of 39,102 rose to its feet and began chanting "Harry, Harry." And minutes later, Caray's widow, Dutchie, led an emotional seventh-inning stretch rendition of "Take Me Out To The Ballgame," just as her husband had done for so many years.

Brewers 7, Marlins 1: In Miami, Jose Valentin hit three homers and drove in five runs as Milwaukee handed Florida its third consecutive loss.

Valentin hit solo homers in the second and seventh innings for a 2-1 lead, then added a three-run homer in the eighth. The home runs were the first this season for Valentin, who had 17 last year.

The three-homer performance was the first at Pro Player Stadium. The last Milwaukee player to accomplish the feat was Dale Sveum against California on July 17, 1987.

Reds 6, Dodgers 3: In Cincinnati, Eduardo Perez singled home the tying run in the seventh inning and



Houston Astros shortstop Ricky Gutierrez (R) steals second while running into as Colorado Rockies Mike Lansing, who can't hold on to a throw from teammate Jeff Reed in the third inning. The Astros were hosting the Rockies in game one of a four game series at the Astrodome in Houston (Reuters photo)

Reggie Sanders followed with a three-run homer, rallying the Reds over the winless Los Angeles Dodgers.

The Dodgers fell to 0-3 because their pitchers couldn't find the strike zone. They gave up only six hits but walked eight batters, and four of them scored.

David Weathers (1-0) struck out a career-high nine batters while holding the light-hitting Dodgers in check. Scott Sullivan pitched the eighth and Jeff Shaw, who agreed to a three-year contract extension before the game, got the last three outs for his second save in two nights.

Mets 2, Pirates 1: In New York, shortstop Kevin Polcovich, who entered the game on a double switch in the ninth inning, made a two-out throwing error that gave the Mets a win over the Pittsburgh Pirates.

The Mets, who have played three one-run games to start the season, got a runner to third in the ninth when Carlos Baerga reached on a fielder's choice, went to second on a walk and took third on a two-out wild pitch by Marc Wilkins.

Astros 15, Rockies 2: In

Houston, Derek Bell tied a career-high with six RBIs as the Astros handed Colorado its first loss this season.

Bell, Craig Biggio, Sean Berry and Ricky Gutierrez each had three hits for the Astros, who had 18 hits. Houston only got a total of 20 hits in a three-game series against San Francisco to open the season.

Padres 13, Cardinals 5: In St. Louis, the San Diego Padres put this one out of even Mark McGwire's considerable reach.

Greg Myers had three hits and matched his career-high with five RBIs, and Mark Langston won his first NL start since 1989 as the Padres beat the St. Louis Cardinals despite McGwire's third homer in three games.

Giants 8, Diamondbacks 3: In Phoenix, Darryl Hamilton hit a two-run double, and Mark Gardner pitched six strong innings as the San Francisco Giants beat the Arizona Diamondbacks.

The Diamondbacks fell to 0-4, the worst start for an expansion team since the 1962 New York Mets lost their first nine games.

Gardner, who was 12-9 for the Giants last season, gave up four hits, struck out eight and walked three in his first start of the year. He retired the first eight batters before Arizona pitcher Jeff Suppan singled in the third.

Arizona's Matt Williams had two doubles, including a ground-rule hit that bounced into the swimming pool area outside the fence in right center.

Braves 5, Phillies 1: In Atlanta, Denny Neagle, the National League's only 20-game winner last season, pitched seven strong innings in his first 1998 start as the Atlanta Braves beat the Philadelphia Phillies.

Neagle (1-0), who was 20-5 in 1997, gave up four hits, walked two and struck out three in a game that was delayed two hours at the start due to thunderstorms.

Kerry Ligenberg finished for the Braves, allowing one hit over the last two innings. Chipper Jones went 4-for-4, including a run-scoring single in the fifth inning when the Braves scored three runs off Philadelphia starter Mike Grace (0-1) to take a 4-1 lead. Jones raised his season average to .615 (8-for-13).

First Division Basketball Championship Irbid teams clash today as Jazireh meet Ahli Monday

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The second round of the First Division Basketball Championship enters its final week Sunday with the Irbid teams Jalil and Hussein playing their last matches of the season at Al Hassan Sports City.

Al Hussein are now in last place and according to regulations have already been relegated.

However, Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) President Mudar Majdoub was quoted as saying that relegation might be scrapped out this year to leave at least two teams from Irbid.

Al Jalil are currently fifth and they need to win their last match to battle Al Jeel for fourth place.

Al Jalil had won their first round encounter 47-35.

In Monday's matches Al Orthodoxi have an easy match against newcomers

Al Jeel who have succeeded in keeping their place in the prestigious group.

Meanwhile Al Jazireh will meet Al Ahli whom they beat 75-69 in the first round in the latters' most impressive performance this season.

Al Jazireh remained atop the standings on score difference despite losing to Al Orthodoxi 73-69 Friday. They had won their first round encounter 92-84.

Al Ahli had been humiliated by Al Jalil before winning 87-82 in their last match, however they will finish among the top three

who have a shot at the title with introduction of the two-round playoffs which start April 12.

However, Judging by the results to far, last season's runners up Al Ahli seem to stand the least chance.

Their inadequate pre-season training has led to an inconsistent form and are suffering the ill-effects of having started training late as they were busier tackling technical obstacles like recruiting a coach and turning back veterans Yousef Zaghloul and Marwan Ma'touq to the lineup after missing a season.

Al Orthodoxi finished third last year but are in better shape to resume their dominance of the game. Their younger lineup seem in a situation to give Al Jazireh a hard time in the fight for the title.

Al Jazireh ended a 30-year domination among the two rivals last season. Prior to that Al Orthodoxi had an undisputed reign from 1976-1989, but Al Ahli won the title in 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1994 aided by the signing of Naser Bushnaq.

Al Orthodoxi came back to win in 1991, 1995 and 1996.

STANDINGS

Team	P	W	L	Sf	Sa	Pts
Jazireh	9	8	1	833	529	17
Orthodoxi	9	8	1	754	486	17
Ahli	9	6	3	619	549	15
Jeel	9	3	6	506	741	12
Jalil	9	2	7	519	666	11
Hussein	9	-	9	478	636	9

Texas beat Toronto; White Sox win 10-4

TORONTO (AP) — Rick Helling pitched a four-hitter for his first shutout in four years and Mark McLemore had three hits and two RBIs as Texas beat Toronto 5-0.

Helling (1-0) limited Toronto to four singles, walked two and struck out two in Friday's game. It was the first complete game shutout in the American League this season and the second of Helling's career.

White Sox 10, Devil Rays 4: In St. Petersburg, Florida, Frank Thomas drove in four runs and Robin Ventura went 4-for-4 with three RBIs as the Chicago White Sox beat the Tampa Bay Devil Rays.

The White Sox rebounded from Thursday night's 20-4 loss to Texas with 15 hits against the Devil Rays, who were coming off two straight victories over Detroit.

Orioles 10, Tigers 2: In Baltimore, B.J. Surhoff hit a three-run homer and Doug Drabek earned his 150th career victory as the Baltimore Orioles extended their winning streak to three.

Cal Ripken had three singles, scored three times and drove in a run for the Orioles, who led 6-0 after three innings.

Royals 9, Twins 5: In Minneapolis, Dean Palmer and Kansas City ruined another home opener.

Palmer was 4-for-5 with a homer and two RBIs as the Royals rallied from a 4-0 deficit against Brad Radke and beat the Twins, who were playing the first home game of what could be their last season in the state.

The Royals, who opened the season with a win at Baltimore, scored four times in the fifth off Radke, who was 20-10 in 1997 and finished third behind in the AL Cy Young voting.

Indians 6, Angels 2: In Anaheim, California, Dave Burba won his first start for Cleveland and Brian Giles hit two solo homers off former teammate Jack

McDowell.

Burba, traded to the Indians from Cincinnati the day before he was set to pitch the Reds' season opener, gave up six hits and one run in seven innings.

Yankees-Athletics, postponed: In Oakland, California, the A's were

rained out for just the 17th regular-season game since moving to California in 1968.

The game, which probably will be made up in August, was called about 30 minutes after its scheduled starting time as heavy rains pelted

the Oakland Coliseum.

Mariners 11, Red Sox 6: In Seattle, Ken Griffey Jr., Jay Buhner and Glenallen Hill homered in the fifth inning as Seattle got its first win.

David Segui added a homer, his third, in the eighth for the Mariners.

Jordan scores 29,000th point

CHICAGO (AP) — Michael Jordan had 41 points and became the third player in NBA history to reach 29,000 career points as the Chicago Bulls beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 107-93 for their 11th straight victory.

Jordan joined Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Wilt Chamberlain as the only players to score 29,000. He needed 14 points to reach the plateau.

Scottie Pippen added 18 points and Dennis Rodman grabbed 16 rebounds on Friday as the Bulls (57-17) tied the longest winning streak in the NBA this season and continued their pursuit of the league's best record and homecourt advantage throughout the playoffs.

Wizards 120, Raptors 112: In Washington, Rod Strickland had 22 points and 11 assists and led a 9-2 run midway through the fourth quarter that secured the victory as the Wizards ended their four-game losing streak.

The victory moved Washington into a tie with Orlando for ninth place in the Eastern Conference. Both the Wizards and Magic — who play each other Sunday — are one-half game behind the New Jersey Nets in the race for the conference's final playoff spot.

76ers 93, Clippers 78: In Philadelphia, Allen Iverson had 21 points, nine rebounds and seven assists as Philadelphia defeated Los Angeles.

Derrick Coleman registered his fourth straight double-double, scoring 21 points and grabbing 12 rebounds, and Theo Ratliff had 13 points and nine rebounds as the 76ers won for the third time in four games.

Hornets 96, Pacers 89: In Charlotte, North Carolina,

Glen Rice scored 13 of his 20 points in the second half and David Wesley had a career-high 15 assists as Charlotte averaged one of its worst losses of the season.

The Hornets' 17th victory in 20 games came one week after they gave up 133 points to Indiana and allowed the Pacers to shoot 60 per cent, both the highest figures allowed by Charlotte all season.

This time the Hornets put the clamps on Reggie Miller, who was suspended and fined after last week's victory for elbowing Vlade Divac. Miller had 19 points, but just six in the second half when the Hornets harassed the Pacers into 9-of-37 field-goal shooting (24 per cent).

Divac had 22 points and 11 rebounds. Anthony Mason had 18 points, 13 rebounds and five assists and Matt Geiger had 15 points and 10 rebounds as Charlotte won its fifth consecutive home game.

Hawks 107, Rockets 87: In Atlanta, Mookie Blaylock and Alan Henderson scored 22 points apiece and Eldridge Recasner matched his season-high with 21 as Atlanta handed Houston its fifth straight loss.

Blaylock added nine rebounds and five assists for the Hawks, who need just two wins to clinch a playoff spot.

The Hawks remained three games behind Charlotte in the battle for the fourth playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

Lakers 105, Cavaliers 93: In Cleveland, coming off a 50-point game, Shaquille O'Neal scored 26 points against a tiny Cleveland lineup diminished by suspensions as Los Angeles beat the Cavaliers.

The Cavs were missing three of their biggest players — All-Star Shawn Kemp,

Vitaly Potapenko and Shawneille Scott — who were suspended for leaving the bench during an altercation Wednesday at Detroit.

O'Neal went scoreless for the first 81 minutes and had only seven points in the first quarter. He finished 11-for-23 from the field and 4-for-7 from the line with 11 rebounds.

Celtics 101, Pistons 100: In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Antoine Walker made a 5.79-metre jumper at the buzzer to complete Boston's comeback from an 18-point, fourth quarter deficit as the Celtics defeated Detroit.

Walker, who scored all but 10 of his 31 points in the second half, took a pass from Dana Barros as the clock ticked down and was unable to drive past Jerome Williams.

Jazz 97, Nuggets 75: In Salt Lake City, Karl Malone scored 22 points and Jeff Hornacek added 15 as Utah gained its ninth consecutive win over the Nuggets.

Shandon Anderson scored 12 points and Greg Ostertag blocked seven shots and grabbed eight rebounds in 24 minutes as the Jazz won their eighth straight home game, and seventh of eight games overall.

Danny Fortson and LaPhonso Ellis each scored 17 for Denver (9-65), which still needs one more victory in its final eight games to avoid tying the worst record in NBA history.

Trail Blazers 109, Mavericks 102: In Portland, Oregon, Rashad Wallace scored 19 of his 27 points in the first half to lead Portland over Dallas.

Brian Grant added 20 points and a career-high 20 rebounds for the Blazers, including 10 points and seven rebounds in the third quarter when the Blazers outscored Dallas 31-25 to

gain control of the game.

SuperSonics 138, Grizzlies 98: In Vancouver, British Columbia, Hersey Hawkins scored a season-high 29 points as Seattle won its first road game in almost a month.

Seattle, which set a team record with 17 3-pointers and had its highest point total of the season, maintained its half-game lead on Utah for first place in the Western Conference.

Bucks 87, Kings 86: In Sacramento, California, Terrell Brandon scored on a layup in traffic with 20 seconds left and Mitch Richmond missed the final shot of the game as Milwaukee dealt Sacramento its 12th straight loss.

The losing streak is the longest for the Kings since they moved to Sacramento for the 1985-86 season.

With Milwaukee trailing 86-85, Brandon drove to the basket and connected on a left-handed scoop shot.

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U.N. complains Iraq playing favouritism in awarding deals

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq is playing a "very dangerous game" of favouritism by giving food and humanitarian contracts to countries that offer political support, a senior U.N. official said Saturday.

The contracts, allowed by the U.N.'s oil-for-food programme, are a humanitarian operation and "it is wrong for Iraq to use them as a political instrument," Antonio Monteiro, the chairman of the U.N. Sanctions Committee, said in an interview.

His committee vets all contracts that Iraq awards for buying food, medicines and other humanitarian goods with the money earned by selling limited amounts of oil under the U.N. programme.

The programme was devised in 1996 to ease the hardship caused by the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Russia, which is leading world efforts to have the sanctions eased, has emerged as Iraq's main trade partner, winning contracts worth \$257.2 million this year. France, another sympathetic country, is second with contracts worth \$110.71 million.

U.S. exports to Iraq are declining and Britain has none. Justifying this trend, Trade Minister Mohammad Mehdi Saleh said publicly last week that Iraq will continue to favour countries that support it.

"It is wrong. We are entering a very dangerous game," Mr. Monteiro told the Associated Press.

If Iraq awards contracts on a political basis, it risks receiving inferior merchandise. Iraq should focus more on getting "better contracts and those that serve the people better," Mr. Monteiro said.

He said he had conveyed this to senior Iraqi officials. "I said to them: No games, no political agenda," Mr. Monteiro is in Baghdad as part of a 20-member diplomatic group that accompanied U.N. arms inspectors in inspecting Iraqi presidential compounds between March 26 and April 2. The experts are searching for Iraq's

weapons of mass destruction. Until such weapons are eliminated, the Security Council will not lift the economic sanctions.

In the last eight years, Iraq has gone from being one of the richest Arab nations to being one of the poorest. The streets of Baghdad, which once had virtually no beggars, today have hundreds of children chasing people for money.

Professional people such as doctors, engineers and pilots are forced to moonlight as taxi drivers to compensate for their salaries being made worthless by inflation.

A U.N. report has found that hundreds of thousands of children in the countryside are suffering from malnutrition caused by the sanctions.

The oil-for-food programme allowed Iraq to export \$2 billion worth of oil every six months beginning January 1997.

The committee has raised the amount to \$5.2 billion for the fourth phase that could begin in June.

Mr. Monteiro said the Sanctions Committee is planning to revamp its procedures for approving Iraqi contracts to expedite the flow of goods. One proposal is to let the committee's secretariat approve food and medicine contracts without waiting for the approval of each of the 15 nations on the panel.

Mr. Monteiro said there also is a need to approve related products together. For example, seeds get the green light quickly, but fertiliser is held up because some countries fear it could be used for making chemical weapons.

Iraq has long complained about delays in approving contracts. The United States and Britain have vetoed many items on the basis they could be put to military use. "All this was based on total mistrust," Mr. Monteiro said.

The atmosphere has improved since Iraq began specifying the exact usage of the requested items, he added.

Iraq thanks Syria for its stand over row with U.N.

DAMASCUS (R) — Iraq on Saturday thanked Syrian President Hafez Al Assad for his stand on its recent crisis with the United Nations over arms inspections.

Presidential spokesman Joubran Kourieh said the thanks were conveyed by Iraqi Justice Minister Shabbab Al Maliki during a meeting with Mr. Assad at the presidential palace in Damascus.

"Mr. Maliki conveyed to President Assad the thanks of the Iraqi leadership for the efforts exerted by Syria to reach a political solution to the crisis with the United Nations," Mr. Kourieh said.

Talks during the meeting, at which Syrian Justice Minister Hussein Hassoun was present, also covered some regional developments, he said without elaborating.

The Iraqi minister told reporters before meeting Mr. Assad that he came to "convey the greetings of the Iraqi people and leadership to the Syrian people and leadership for their brotherly stand with Iraq during the crisis."

Syria strongly opposed any military action against Iraq and called for a peaceful solution to the crisis which erupted when Iraq refused to allow U.N. inspectors to search Iraqi presidential sites.

The row was defused in February when Iraq signed a deal with the United Nations that allowed inspectors to visit all sites they chose, including the palaces.

Syria's ties with Baghdad, severed at the beginning of the 1980s, improved last May when both countries agreed to reopen their borders to encourage the flow of trade and improve economic cooperation.

PNA urges U.S. to go public with peace proposals

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — The Palestinian National Authority wants the United States to present proposals publicly "without delay" to break the deadlock in PNA-Israeli peace talks.

"Time is crucial. It's time the U.S. ideas and proposals to break the impasse are officially forwarded and it's time for the U.S. to move from the process of negotiations only to substance," Saeb Erekat, a top Palestinian negotiator, told Reuters.

"The U.S. promised us it would formally present its initiative next week, and starting Monday we expect Washington to send us the initiative in writing," said Nabil Abu Rdnah, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's adviser, who also spoke to Reuters.

Mr. Abu Rdnah urged the U.S. to speed up its peace efforts "to avoid any further deterioration, especially since tensions have flared following last week's killing of Muhyideen Al Sharif, a bomb-maker of the Hamas group."

David Bar-Ilan, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's communications chief, said Israel had indicated to the U.S. that "it should talk to the sides and not to come out with a plan in public."

The Palestinian cabinet said in a statement issued by the Wafa news agency after its Friday meeting that the U.S. "should without delay, make public its initiative to pull the peace process from the abyss."

A senior Palestinian official said the PNA had informed the U.S. administration it had accepted in principle U.S. proposals.

The official, who asked not to be identified, said Mr. Arafat had asked the U.S. administration to submit its proposals officially in writing.

"We have made clear our position to the U.S. administration. The U.S. also knows very well Israel's position as well, so there is no need for further negotiations. It's time for the U.S. to move with mechanisms of implementation," Mr. Erekat said.



IN PRAYER: A Hindu woman devotee offers prayers Saturday in the Brahmaputra river near the river port city of Narayanganj as part of a religious ceremony called Ashtami Snan. Hindus, take a dip in the waters of the Brahmaputra believing it purifies life (AFP photo)

Blair wraps up ASEM summit with show of 'faith' in Asia

LONDON (AFP) — British Prime Minister Tony Blair wrapped up the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit Saturday with a show of "faith" in the Asian economies and an insistence that open trade was vital to secure an escape route from recent economic turmoil.

"Europe does and will stand by Asia in its hour of need," Mr. Blair said, adding that leaders had agreed on "a very clear view of the need for solidarity between Europe and Asia."

Mr. Blair said that "the best way forward is to remain open," underscoring ASEM's "absolute rejection of protectionism."

There was an "extraordinary degree of agreement and support" for the need to overhaul Asia's financial systems, he said. The 15 European Union and 10 Asian leaders gathered here had given a "boost" to "the crucial task of restoring confidence in the region."

They had also agreed on limited concrete measures to alleviate the crisis, including the launch of a trust fund aimed at providing technical assistance to the region's financial systems.

ASEM leaders had "shown our faith in the fundamental strength of the economies of Asia," Mr. Blair said.

The talks, dominated by Asia's currency and financial turmoil, were held against a background of plunging share prices and currency in Japan, the region's powerhouse economy.

Mr. Blair said that the conference had underscored "the importance of keeping our markets open, both in Europe and Asia."

Some Asian countries, notably Indonesia and Malaysia, had made calls for protectionist measures to prevent speculative onslaught against their currencies.

Others, meanwhile, had feared that Europe might seek to insulate itself from cheap Asian exports by raising fresh trade barriers.

Mr. Blair welcomed a "new era that has opened up in our relationship with China," words echoed by European Commission President Jacques Santer, who hailed a "global partnership" for China.

While proceedings were "dominated" by the economic agenda, Mr. Blair said that "crime, the environment, welfare of children and fundamental rights were all discussed."

Human rights activists complained that the summit had failed to take account of alleged human rights abuses in some Asian countries, notably China and Indonesia.

The summit ratified a set of proposals to bolster educational links between Europe and Asia.

"I believe their ideas will generate new trading links between our regions," Mr. Blair said.

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Michael Jackson's wife gives birth to girl

BEVERLY HILLS (AP) — The King of Pop has a princess to go with his prince. Michael Jackson's wife, Debbie Rowe Jackson, gave birth Friday to their second child, Paris Michael Katherine Jackson, at Spaulding Pain Medical Clinic in Beverly Hills, a source close to his organisation told AP on condition of anonymity.

The hospital refused to comment. Mrs. Jackson had earlier said that the child would be named Paris because she was conceived in the City of Light. "I wanted to name her Michael after Michael, but Michael said no," she told KNBC-TV in November.

"So we decided Paris because that's where she was conceived, Michael because I really want Michael's name in her name and Katherine after his mom."

Paris is the second of three children of Michael and Debbie. Their first child, Prince Michael Jackson, was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a third child, a son named Prince Michael Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a fourth child, a daughter named Paris Michael Katherine Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a fifth child, a son named Prince Michael Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a sixth child, a daughter named Paris Michael Katherine Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a seventh child, a son named Prince Michael Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a eighth child, a daughter named Paris Michael Katherine Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a ninth child, a son named Prince Michael Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a tenth child, a daughter named Paris Michael Katherine Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a eleventh child, a son named Prince Michael Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a twelfth child, a daughter named Paris Michael Katherine Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a thirteenth child, a son named Prince Michael Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a fourteenth child, a daughter named Paris Michael Katherine Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a fifteenth child, a son named Prince Michael Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a sixteenth child, a daughter named Paris Michael Katherine Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a seventeenth child, a son named Prince Michael Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a eighteenth child, a daughter named Paris Michael Katherine Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a nineteenth child, a son named Prince Michael Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a twentieth child, a daughter named Paris Michael Katherine Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a twenty-first child, a son named Prince Michael Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a twenty-second child, a daughter named Paris Michael Katherine Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a twenty-third child, a son named Prince Michael Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a twenty-fourth child, a daughter named Paris Michael Katherine Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a twenty-fifth child, a son named Prince Michael Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a twenty-sixth child, a daughter named Paris Michael Katherine Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a twenty-seventh child, a son named Prince Michael Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Michael and Debbie have a twenty-eighth child, a daughter named Paris Michael Katherine Jackson, who was born in 1992.

Mayor of Tehran detained on corruption charges

TEHRAN (AP) — The mayor of Tehran, a close ally of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, has been detained in connection with a large corruption scandal, the official Iranian news agency reported Saturday.

Gholamhossein Karbaschi has been taken into "temporary detention" by the public prosecutor's office, the Islamic Republic News Agency said, without elaborating.

The evening newspaper Resalat, which opposes the mayor, said Mr. Karbaschi was "arrested on a charge of wasting public funds, embezzlement of billions of rials and mismanagement while in office."

But a judicial official said Mr. Karbaschi has not been officially charged of any crime.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the detention was "aimed at making sure he is available for probable charges against him."

In November, the 44-year-old mayor was questioned in court about allegations that members of his administration were involved in a corruption scandal that rocked the capital.

The court prohibited him from leaving the country. More than a dozen senior municipal officials have been prosecuted for graft in the same case.

Newspaper reports have previously alleged that Mr. Karbaschi is accused of embezzling funds in the Booshtan shopping complex project in western Tehran.

Mr. Karbaschi, who played a major role in Mr. Khatami's 1997 election victory, has said the allegations against him were politically motivated and trumped up by the president's opponents.

Mr. Khatami's rivals, who belong to a hardline faction that supported Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri in the election, have spearheaded the campaign against Mr. Karbaschi.

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Southern Lebanese suspicious of Israeli pullout proposal

By Kamel Jaber
Reuters

NABATIYEH — Israel's conditional offer to withdraw its troops from south Lebanon is viewed with suspicion by residents of the area trapped in a deadly cycle of shelling, rocket attacks and air raids.

"I lost my wife during an Israeli aggression 10 years ago. The Israelis want to drag the Lebanese government into implementing a solution that is not in their favour," said Hussein Mui'im, a 56-year-old farmer. "They occupied our land. We did not occupy their land."

Israel's inner security cabinet adopted on Wednesday a 20-year-old U.N. resolution demanding its immediate and unconditional withdrawal from a 15-km-deep self-declared security zone in the Jewish state occupies in south Lebanon.

But Israel linked any pullout to Lebanese government security guarantees against cross-border guerrilla attacks led by the Hizbollah (party of God).

Residents of south Lebanon have grown accustomed to dashed hopes since Israeli troops first invaded the volatile area in 1978. The current occupation zone was carved out in 1985.

But violence often spills over into areas like Iqlim Al Toufah near Nabatiyeh, just beyond hilltop positions held by Israeli troops and their South Lebanon Army (SLA) local militia allies.

Israeli planes scream overhead while on the ground Hizbollah fighters wage a war of attrition using rockets, roadside bombs and machineguns from their Iqlim Al Toufah bastion, 40 km south of Beirut.

Israel's conditional offer will only mean something to ordinary southern Lebanese when all sides lay down their arms.

"If Israel has good intentions, we welcome this decision and those who reject it are not suffering the way we do," said Said Ahmad, a 68-year-old father of 11 who earns a meagre living as a plumber.

"Nobody feels for us. They want us to be strong, but living in this area we don't find anybody supporting us," he added.

Lebanon and its powerful neighbour Syria condemned the Israeli offer as an attempt to force negotiations on U.N. Resolution 425.

Syria is the main power broker in Lebanon, with some 35,000 troops in the country.

The big question now is whether all sides will find an opportunity to end the bloodshed.

"I have lost a son and a brother. Israel is not honest, in what it is saying. Israel is dirtier than before," said Haniya Abed, who is rebuilding two rooms of her house which was destroyed by Israeli shelling a few years ago.

Like many in the Iqlim Al Toufah area, she was displaced during an Israeli attack 10 years ago but chose to return to her village.

Many people dismiss the Israeli offer as a political move that will not ease their suffering.

"Israel is manoeuvring. Our experience with Israel is the best proof of that. They want the ball to be in the Lebanese court. But the ball is in the court of the aggressor," said Naem Hamza, a 43-year-old father of four.

He said the Israeli offer was a political move that will not ease their suffering.

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Helmut Kohl reaches 68, still trying to slim

BONN (AFP) — German Chancellor Helmut Kohl celebrated his 68th birthday Friday preparing to tackle the same old problem — his weight.

Kohl spent his birthday in Britain at a summit of East Asian and European leaders, but next week he heads off to Bad Hofgastein in Austria for his now traditional Easter slimming cure, officials said.

Unofficially his weight is estimated at some 130 kg, a figure which many observers regard as on the light side, but Kohl himself has always maintained a discreet silence.

His weight, he has said, is a state secret.

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